Punica: Book 1

Silius Italicus

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Book 1

I start the tale of the war by which the fame of Rome was raised
to the skies and savage Carthage forced to endure Italian rule.
Allow me, Muse, to record the splendid achievements made
by long ago Hesperia[1], and the mass of warriors Rome produced,
a host of men to go to war, when the Cadmean race[2] broke
its sacred oath and began hostilities to settle sovereignty,
and the quest was long and uncertain on which city's head
would Fortune place hegemony's crown. The leading men
of Carthage three more times with unholy war broke the pact
arranged with the Roman Senate, approved by Jupiter; three times
the impious sword induced them rashly to breach a settled peace.
In the second war the warring races strove utterly to destroy,
exterminate each other and they, whose fate it was to prevail
came close to disaster themselves: a Roman general sacked
the citadel of Carthage, the Palatine was surrounded in siege
by Hannibal's men and Rome kept safe only by its city walls.
The reasons for such rage and hatred nurtured over time
with such fanaticism and for war handed down by generations,
it is right for me now to reveal and disclose the divine intent.
And now I shall trace the start of these huge convulsions.
Once Dido fled by sea the land of Tyre, Pygmalion's realm,
a land polluted by his brother's death by fratricide,
and made her landfall on the fated shores of Libya.
Obtaining land by purchase there she built new city walls,
around the shore so far as was contained by a flensed bull's hide.
According to ancient belief it was here that Juno chose
to found for the exiles an eternal city, a favoured home
that she preferred to Argos and Mycenae, Agamemnon's town,
but when she saw that Rome had raised her head above
the world's high minded cities and sent her navy to cross
the seas and carry victorious standards through the world,
in fear of what might come she fired the hearts of the men
of Carthage with a lust for war, but still their efforts failed
in this first round of hostilities, their armada crushed
at Lilybaeum[3]. Then Juno took up arms again and renewed
the war; a single general sufficed, as she prepared to wreak
quite universal havoc both by land and by sea.
And warlike Hannibal took Juno's total rage upon himself,
while Juno dared herself to set this individual to counter Fate.
Rejoicing then in that man of blood and not unaware
of the savage storms and disasters that awaited Italy,
she spoke, “In spite of me the Trojan exile carried Troy
to Latium and with him his twice taken household gods,
and, victorious, founded a town for the Trojans at Lavinium.
So be it, so your river banks, Ticinus, cannot contain
the Roman dead, just as my slave, the Trebia, flows back

[1] Italy – the Western Land.
[2] Carthaginians.
[3] In 242 BCE in the sea off Sicily, off the promontory of Lilybaeum.

through the fields of Gaul, made thick with the blood
and weapons of Rome, and the carcasses of Roman men,
just so Lake Trasimene is horrified to see its waters red with gore;
so long as I, on high, shall see Cannae, graveyard of Italy,
and the Iapygian plain submerged in Roman blood and you,
Aufidus' stream, uncertain of your course, strain scarce
to break your path through banks hemmed in by shields
and helmets and men's severed limbs to Adriatic shores."
She spoke and inflamed the young man's heart for war.
The man was by nature avid for action, but his word
was not at all to be trusted, cunning, indeed, but unjust.
In arms no respecter of gods; courageous in vice,
with no time for the honours of peace; a thirst for blood
burned deep in his heart. Above all in the prime
of his youth he longed to blot out Lilybaeum' stain,
parental disgrace, to drown the peace in Sicily's seas.
His inspiration Juno, who vexed his heart with ambition.
In nocturnal dreams already he had stormed the Capitol,
or with passage swift traversed the lofty Alps.
As well his servants were often wrenched from their sleep
at his door, dreading his terrible cries in the desolate night,
and found him bathed in sweat, fighting battles yet
to come and waging phantasmagorical war.
A father's hate had inspired a young boy's rage against Italy,
against Saturn's realm, and had begun his dreams of fame[4].
His father Hamilcar had sprung from the ancient Tyrian house
of Barcas and traced his long-lived line from Belus the king.
When widowed Dido fled an enslaved Tyre then Belus's son,
the young Pygmalion, escaped the dread tyrant's impious sword
and companioned her in the face of fortune's unpredictability.
The noble, famed and warlike Hamilcar was of this line, and when
young Hannibal gained the gift of language and articulate speech,
then, skilled in feeding passion's flame, he sowed the seeds
in the young boy's heart of a future war with Rome.
There was in the heart of Carthage a shrine sacred to the ghost
of Dido, an object then of worship and the people's wonderment,
around which temple yew and pine trees grew to hide it from
the brightness of the sun with gloom and melancholic shade.
In this place, men say, the queen had on a time shed all the cares
of humankind. In mournful marble were stood statues there
of Belus, father of the line, and of all the line that traced
their lineage to him: the pride of the nation Agenor was there,
and Phoenix who gave his long lasting name to the land,
while Dido was there too, for ever united with Sychaeus now,
Aenaeas' sword before her feet, and one hundred altars stood
in ranks devoted to the gods above and potent Erebus.
Here, hair unleashed and in Stygian garb, the priestess calls
upon Proserpina's power and all the powers of Acheron.
The earth makes moan and dreadful sibilant whispers rush

[4] The Latin here is extremely difficult to construe. The translation given follows Housman's emendation and give at least a plausible sense.

through the shades and on the altars flare spontaneous flames.
Conjured by spells the dead themselves flit through the void,
and perspiration stands on Dido's marble face.
On his father's orders Hannibal came to this shrine,
where Hamilcar studied the manner and look of the boy.
He grew not pale at the Afric priestess' bacchanalian rant,
nor at the dreadful temple rites, the gateway smeared
with gore nor at the flames that rose as the chant was heard.
His father stroked his head and kissed him there and then
and roused his spirits with exhortation strong couched so,
"The recidivist race of Rome tramples the Cadmean state
of Carthage with unjust treaties: if the fates deny that my
right hand cannot repel this disgrace from our native land,
then wish the glory yours, my son; come, start a war
to bring destruction to Rome. Let the youth of Tuscany
already dread your birth, and Italian mothers refuse to rear
their own young sons, my son, at the prospect of your rise!"
These the spurs to fire his son and an oath unspeakable,
"When I come of age I shall pursue with iron and with fire
the men of Rome by land and sea, reprise the fall of Troy.
Neither shall the gods nor treaties inhibiting war arrest
my task, nor yet the towering Alps nor Tarpeian Rocks.
This purpose I swear by the numinous power of Mars,
and by, my queen, your shade." And then a black beast
was sacrificed to Hecate, and the priestess in haste
cut open the steaming corpse to seek an oracle,
consulted the ghost as it fled the inward parts.
Yet when she sought and entered the mind of the gods
in keeping with her ancient and customary art, she spoke,
"I see the fields of Italy strewn with military dead,
and lakes stained red with floods of Roman blood.
How great the massive cliff that reaches for the stars,
upon the airy peak of which your camp will cling!
Your men now plummet at pace! In dread the city walls
light beacon fires, and the lands that stretch beneath
the western sky is alight with Punic flame. Behold,
the Po runs blood and fierce of face there lies the man
who carried third his chosen spoils to grace the Thunderer[5].
What is that storm that looms with sudden sodden clouds,
while ethereal fires flash forth from the ruptured sky?
The gods prepare great things: the sky's high palace
shouts thunder, and Jupiter, I see, in arms." Foretelling
the fates any further Juno banned – and the victim's guts
fell silent then, and timeless toils and chance lay hid.
So Hamilcar left his plans for war hid deep in his heart
and made for world's end, for Gibraltar and Cadiz, but while
he brought to the Pillars of Hercules the flags of Africa,

[5] A Roman commander who killed the enemy's commander in battle was awarded *spolia opima* – 'choice spoils'. This exploit was achieved only three times in Roman history, but once in Roman comedy in Plautus' *Amphitryo*, v. 252, 'Amphitryo himself cut down with his own hand Pterelas, their king.'

this Carthaginian leader fell dead in a hard fought fight.
Meanwhile the guiding reins are handed on to Hasdrubal,
who harried the western wealth and the people of Spain
and those beside the Baetis, his savagery uncontrolled.
The general's heart was hard and unmitigated his rage.
The fruit of rule was cruelty and bloodlust made him harsh.
To be feared for his demented mind was his honour's mark -
not content to glut his rage with customary punishments.
A man, Tagus by name, of ancient line and handsome, well tried
in war, Hasdrubal, careless of gods and men, he crucified high
on a wooden cross to gloat and show before the weeping crowd
the corpse, unburied, of their king. He took the name of Tagus,
from the river's auriferous stream, a source at last of sad song
and lament for the nymphs in the caves and streams of Spain,
nor would his choice have been the Pactolus, nor yet the pools
of Lydia, nor the pampas lands made yellow by the sands
of gold, that flowed and poured from Hebrus' streams.
First always to enter the fight and the last to resile, sat high
on his steed and giving his horse its head, reins loose,
no sword, nor no spear shaft hurled from afar could stop
his thundering charge. In triumph he flew and through
the ranks of both sides the golden armour of Tagus was known.
And when a servant saw his dreadful strength suspended there
in gruesome death, he stole away his master's well loved sword
in secrecy, and swiftly rushed the inside palace gates
to smite Hasdrubal's pitiless heart again and again.
The Carthaginians rejoiced in a cruelty now fired by grief
and rage and rushed to bring the instruments of pain.
The flames and white hot steel were incessant, his body
in shreds, torn everywhere, mutilated by a myriad blows,
while the torturers' hands unceasingly sowed the hurt
in the marrow deep and the flames burned on and on
in the wounds, a dreadful thing to see and tell. The limbs
by the torturers' arts were stretched as agony commended,
and when at last the sum of his life's blood rushed forth,
the very fervid bones did smoke as limbs deliquesced.
His mind remains intact as he mocks, overcomes the pain -
a virtual spectator he scolds the flagging torturers
and loudly demands a cross to match his master's fate.
In the midst of these wretched rituals of punishment, made light
of by the victim, the army, distressed at the loss of its general
demanded with a single, eager voice that Hannibal replace him.
Their sense of his patriotic fervour and virtue fired their zeal
for him, as well the story spread abroad of the sworn oath
of war against Rome, his audacious youth and matching heart,
a mind well armed with guile and a native gift of eloquence.
The Libyan chieftains hailed him first as commander-in chief,
then next the Pyrenean tribes and the warriors of Spain.
At once his fearsome heart did swell with pride that such
a mass of land and sea had come beneath his sway.
The land of Libya, seared by Aeolus' winds, burns beneath

the scorching sign of Cancer and of Phoebus' blazing orb –
an enormous promontory of Asia, or another continent.
Its rosy eastern border is the Nile whose sevenfold stream
impacts upon and swells the turbid waters of the sea,
but where the land in milder mood looks to the north,
where the straits of Hercules are separating Europe's land,
which it sees from neighbouring heights, and ocean bars
the west, while Atlas' southern range restricts its realm,
yes, Atlas, whose dereliction of duty would bring
the sky and stars and firmament come crashing down.
His beard is white with frost, while shady woods
of pine encircle gloomy brows; storms scour
his hollow temples, steaming rivers rush from cloud
filled jaws. Deep seas assail his flanks on either side,
and when the weary sun has bathed his steeds,
exhausted in the ocean's deep, they conceal
his chariot of fire within a sea that steams.
But so far as Africa spreads her squamous plains,
she bakes beneath vast floods of venom – snakes -
but where a gentler clime controls her fertile fields,
her yield surpasses that of Sicily and even Egypt's toil.
Here throng Numidian tribes that do not know the use of reins
instead the supple switch plied betwixt the twin
and mobile ears in sport directs their beast – no bit required.
A nurse of wars and of warrior men this land, of men
that trust no sword, but rather tools of mass deception.
Hispanic troops complete a second military camp,
allies from Europe won by the victories of Hamilcar.
Their bellicose horses fill the plains with whinnying cry,
high stepping steeds drag fast the chariots of war -
Olympians devour the ground with no swifter wheel!
They are profligate of life and half in love with sudden death.
And when a man has passed his years of manly strength,
intolerant of time he does not deign to age: the means
to his fated end - his own right hand. All metals are theirs:
the pale electrum seams betray their double origin,
while the rugged earth is nurse to the black iron ore.
God hides the cause of crime, but still acquisitive Asturians
grub deep in the ravaged entrails of the earth and return
with wretched faces pale as the gold that was dug.
The Tagus and Durius vie, Pactolus[6], with you in wealth,
Oblivio's flood rolls over the Gravii's lands and glittering sands,
and reproduces hellish Lethe's effect upon the people there.
The land responds to Ceres' gifts and welcomes Bacchus too,
and Athena's olive nowhere grows more loftily than there.
When these races yielded to the Carthaginian potentate,
the reins of affairs were ceded to him, and he used
his father's diplomatic skills, and with bribes and threats
reversed the senate's decrees. The first to take on toil,

[6] Gold bearing rivers: the Tagus and Durius in the Iberian peninsular, the Pactolus in Asia Minor.

on the march, and undertake his share, if need there be
to raise in haste a camp's defence - no idle man in anything
that spurred him on to fame, while natural sleep he spurned
and kept his armed and wakeful vigil through the night,
at times stretched out upon the ground, his general's cloak
betraying him, competing with his Libyan army grunts;
sat high upon his horse, his colours held before him, he led
his regiment of troops; bare headed he welcomed the rain
that drives a man mad, and the pandemonium above.
The Carthaginians watched and the awestruck Spaniard shook,
as on his startled horse he passed through the blasts
of Jupiter's bolts and the fires that flashed from the wind
and tortured clouds; nor the Dog-star's heat, nor the dust
of the marching column could made him break his stride.
When the parched earth cracked and gaped in the sun's
fierce blast and midday heat seared the sky's high dome,
he thinks it womanish to rest in the moistened shade;
he worked at thirst, saw springs, but abandoned them.
He would grip the reins of some bucking horse and break
him into war, would seek the reputation of a fatal arm,
would cross the rumbling rocks of some torrent unknown,
then summon from the far distant bank his friends.
Always first to stand upon the ramparts of a city stormed,
and when at speed upon the plain of savage battle joined,
wherever he plied his steel his path grew red with blood.
His fate he pursues therefore, intent on breaking treaties,
and taking delight so far as he can in bringing Rome to war,
while from the reaches of the west he strikes at the Capitol.
His fanfare of war resounded first before Saguntum's gates;
hostilities began in the hero's lust for greater wars to come.
The Herculean city's walls lift up not far from the sea,
where the land's ascent is gentle, a town whose noble name
Zacynthus, buried there on a lofty hill, made sacred once.
A companion of Hercules he was marching back to Thebes,
Geryon slain, and praising that feat to the skies above.
Three lives that monster had and armed its bulk with three
right arms and carried a head on each of its triple necks.
The earth has never seen another man whose end
demanded multiple deaths, as the three grim Fates
spun thread the third when the two before were cut.
Exultant Zacynthus showed off his spoils and victorious
led captive cattle beasts to the spring in the midday heat,
when he trod on a snake whose jaws engorged
with sun-fermented poison dealt a lethal strike,
and the man of Greece lay dead on the soil of Spain.
Then colonists in flight from Greece arrived, their guide
the south wind, their native isle, washed by seas Ionian,
Zacynthus' isle, a small part once of Laertes' larger realm.
On these foundations presently built Apulian men
in search of a home, sent out by famous Ardea, a town
so rich in sons and governed by great hearted kings.

The freedom of Saguntum and its ancestral dignity
were guaranteed by treaties banning Carthaginian rule.
The Punic general, treaty broken, moved his camp fires close.
The broad plains shook to the tramp of marching feet.
The man himself in fury shook his head, rode round the walls
on panting horse to measure up the nervous buildings there,
and told the populace to open up their gates, desert
the ramparts, that, now besieged, their treaties were
as distant as was Italy – no hope of quarter in defeat.
"Your senate's decrees, laws, justice, trust and gods,"
he cried, "are in my hands!" To underline his words
he hurled his spear to pierce the armour of a warrior,
who stood on the wall venting empty threats, one Caicus.
He fell, transfixed and spitted quite through the gut,
and limbs unstrung slid down the precipitous wall
and, dead, restored his victor's blood warm spear.
With a roar the soldiers following his lead, enclosed
the city's walls in stygian clouds of weaponry.
Each soldier's virtue shone despite the mass of men.
His eyes on the general each man fought as if alone.
One flung a storm of missiles from Balearic sling;
three times he swung the subtle thong around his head
to bury his missile in the air as prey to the winds,
this man's strong arm released thrown stones that sang,
this man's lance flew accelerated by its light weight thong.
Out front their leader, conspicuous in his father's arms,
now hurls a smoking torch, ablaze with fiery pitch,
now with pike or javelin or stone advances tireless,
or lets fly shafts of double jeopardy from his bow,
in venom dipped, exulting in his quiver's deceit:
just so the Dacian in his warlike Scythian lands
delights to tip his sharpened shafts with native drugs
and launch their sudden showers on Hister's binomial banks.
Next task to ring the city's hill with fronting towers
and invest the town with a concatenation of forts.
Once Loyalty was held in high esteem by the men of old,
honoured now in name alone! Stands firm their doughty youth
and sees its flight cut off, their walls' earthworks enclosed,
but think it a worthy Italian death to fall in Saguntum,
its loyalty preserved. And now they strain their strength
more bitterly. Their catapult, Massilian made, its cords
taut, hurls gargantuan rocks that roar through the air,
or, ordnance changed, the mighty machine flings
tree trunks ironclad to smash a path through the ranks.
The din resounds on either side. The forces clash
as fierce in battle as if Rome itself were under siege
with ditch and mound. And Hannibal roared, "So many men,
a race bred for war, why hesitate before a conquered race?
Ashamed of our initiatives, our enterprise? So much for guts
and glory and your leader's first command! Is such the dread
filled tale we make for Italy, with skirmishes such as these?"

Their hearts ablaze exulted, fired by Hannibal's words,
drunk deep within, inspired also by promises of wars to come.
Bare hands tear at the ramparts and men abandon right
hands severed in retreat from the walls. A lofty mound
was raised that set throngs of warriors above the town.
The people within were protected and the enemy kept
from the gates by *falcarica*[7] that needed many men to man,
a wooden missile, a terror to see, selected from the trees
upon the Pyrenean snowy tops - city walls scarce proof
against its dread and monstrous iron head. Its shaft,
with pitch and sulphur smeared, gave off black smoke.
Like a thunderbolt flung from the highest walls of the keep,
with flickering flame it cleaves the furrowed air,
a match for the blazing meteor that plunges from sky
to earth and blinds men's eyes with blood red tail.
The weapon's rapid strike that often tossed to the winds
the limbs of his fighting men bewildered Hannibal;
when in whirlwind flight it struck a siege tower's side,
then Vulcan's flame consumed the structure utterly,
and buried arms and men alike in incandescent debris.
A press of close packed shields protected their retreat
until with sap and secret excavation they undercut at last
the walls which fell breached, opening a path into the town .
The fortifications collapsed - a fearful crash - and the work
of Hercules and his gigantic stones in disarray gave up
a mighty roar to strike the sky. In the highest Alps'
sky-scraping peaks, when a mass of rocks is torn away,
just so the avalanche scours the echoing mountain side.
The fallen rampart rose again with haste – a base
for embattled ranks[8], while the fallen wall, collapsed
between, prevented either side from urging on the fight
both hither and yon across the ruin and wrack.
In front of all there leapt a man in his first flush of youth,
one Murrus, of noble Rutilian blood, Saguntine on his mother's side,
but also Greek – twin roots combined to make a blend unique.
And Murrus observed Aradus intent on his advance
and loudly summoned his men and stopped him with a spear
in the gap of flesh between his helmet and cuirass;
he pinned him prostrate with his spear and taunted him:
"False man of Carthage, I lay you low! Sure you'll be first to climb
the Capitol victorious! Was ever such unbridled ambition before?
Now wage your war in Hell!" Enraged he buried his spear
in the groin of Hiberus, the opponent who fronted him next
and as he trampled his features, now in the rictus of death,
"This way lies," he said, "your path to the walls of Rome,
despite your dreadful host: quick, take the route you must!"

[7] 'The *falcarica* was a missile of the largest dimensions, hurled by machinery from towers called *falae.* It had an iron head and wooden shaft; and the iron just under the head was enveloped in tow steeped in pitch, which was ignited before the weapon was discharged,' Note *ad loc* in J.D.Duff's Loeb edition (London and New York, 1934), p.30.

[8] The text *cumulo certantum,* v. 373 is apparently corrupt: the translation offers a possible sense.

As Hiberus strained to resume the fight then Murrus dodged
his thrust and snatched his shield to pierce his naked flank.
Hiberus had been rich in land and flocks, unknown to fame
as he waged war with bow and javelin upon wild beasts,
a man so happy in his woods and life of esteemed obscurity,
if he had not carried his shafts outside his woodland home.
In pity for him one Ladmus is there intent on fearful revenge,
and is savagely mocked in turn, "You will tell of this right arm
to Hamilcar's ghost," said Murrus, "which when the mob is dead
will a gift of Hannibal make to keep you company" – and standing tall
he smashed down with his sword on his bronze and crested helm
to shatter and scatter the skull within its protective shield.
Next Chremes of the unshorn locks that shaded his brow,
whose hair had fashioned a dreadlocked hat upon his head;
then Masulis and Kartalo, strong in war and green old age,
who did not shrink from petting the lioness with cubs,
and Bagrada, shield engraved with namesake river's source,
Nasimonian Hiempsal too that plundered the Syrtes' wastes,
and dared to loot ships wrecked in the surge of sand and sea –
all these men fell cut off together by that enraged right hand;
as was Athyr, adept at milking snakes for venom dire,
snake whisperer - whose contact lulled fell snakes to sleep,
would test a suppositious child with hornèd viper near.
And Garamantian Hiarbas, you also fell, who lived beside
the visionary groves, the curved ram's horn distinctive on
your helmet – in vain you cursed the oracle that told
of your return and often railed at mendacious Jupiter.
Already crammed with corpses the rampart grew high
and the ruin's smoke was infused with dreadful death.
Then Murrus eagerly called out Hannibal to fight.
But Hannibal was far away where a band of youths
had made an unexpected sally from the gates, and as if
no shaft nor enemy hand could bring him harm or death,
he mixed with both sides and everywhere raged, his sword
aloft which old man Temisus, from Hesperides' shores,
had forged with fire and song, confident in the power
of magic spells, the sorcerer, to forge and harden steel.
And Hannibal was a match for Mars, careening far and wide
in the land of Giants aboard his chariot of war, his sword
on high, which put to flight the Titan horde, as he ruled
the blazing battle's din with snorting steeds and squealing wheels.
Already Hannibal had despatched Hostus down to the dead,
with Pholus the Rutulian and Metiscus the Huge, Lydus too
and Durius, blond Galaesus and Chromis and Gyas, the twins.
The turn of Daunus came next, a man of eloquence *sans pareil*
in moving and moulding the minds of government,
and none more skilled in guarding the laws, who mixed
harsh insults with his blows: "What paternal Furies drive
you here, you Carthaginian? For this is no Sidonian town,
the work of a woman's hand or bought for a payment of cash -
no shoreline measured and leased to an exiled tribe!

These walls you see are allied to Rome and were raised by gods."
But even as such boasts were tossed across the plain,
with a show of great strength then Hannibal snatched him
from the midst of the fray and bound his hands behind
his back to save him up to savour angry punishment delayed;
then railing at his men he ordered the standards be advanced
and through the very mounds of slaughter and accumulated death,
berserk himself, he showed the way and called upon each man
by name and rashly offered as plunder a city still intact.
But when news was brought by frightened messengers that the fight
elsewhere was fierce and Mars adverse, that the gods had deemed
it right to hand Murrus the day, in greater haste enraged he flew
on a maddened course, abandoning his mammoth feats.
His nodding helmet's plume upon his head shone deadly bright,
as bright as the comet's tail, inspiring fear in a fierce king's heart[9],
its plume of fire blood red: its deadly torch spews ruddy rays
from heaven, and with savage flame the coruscating star
is a blazing threat to the earth from outermost space.
Spears, standards, warriors give way to his headlong charge,
both battle lines are terrified; the fiery tip of his lance
sheds baneful light, his shield boss shining far and wide.
As, when the Aegean sea surges to the stars, the chill hearts
of sailors tremble, and with a mighty roar the north west winds
drive ashore the mounded and accumulated waves along
the long sea strand; the wind from afar swells, sounds
loud, crosses with breaking surf the timid Cyclades.
Not all the hostile missiles flying from the city walls,
nor yet the smoking brands before his face nor the rocks
hurled skillfully from catapults could check him. As soon
as he saw the glittering helm on Murrus' head and his arms
blood red and golden in the sun, enraged he began to speak,
"See – Murrus, the man to check the mighty schemes of Africa!
The man to impede our war on Rome! I will have you know
how little worth your treaties are and your Ebro's boundary[10]!
Keep your virgin loyalty and maintain the rule of law, and leave
it to me to face the gods I have betrayed." In turn then Murrus,
"You come in answer to my prayers: long since my heart
demanded battle, burned with desire to take your life – so reap
the reward of treachery and seek for Italy beneath the earth!
My good right hand remits your lengthy pilgrimage to Rome,
absolves your need to cross the snowy Pyrenees and Alps."
Then Hannibal on seeing his enemy come close and putting faith
in his superior position ripped and seized an enormous rock
from the rampart and hurled it at his climbing enemy's face,
and the stone plummeted down, accelerating in its fall.
Then Murrus, concussed by the fragment of wall, fell down,
but shame inflamed his heart, and his conscious courage failed
him not, despite his disadvantaged place; he ground his teeth

[9] The appearance of a comet was interpreted as a sign of a change of dynasty.
[10] See Duff, qv ad loc. p. 40, 'In the treaty between Rome and Carthage, the river Ebro (*Hebrus*) was the limit beyond which Carthage was forbidden to advance; and the freedom of Saguntum was guaranteed.'

as he laboured upwards over the rubble that blocked his path,
but when all of Hannibal's bulk loomed closer and glowed
with nearer light, he felt as if the whole of the enemy force
was on the move to surround him, closing in on his fear,
and Murrus' eyes grew dark and misty before his mighty foe.
At once one thousand hands and as many glittering swords
appeared before, and countless nodding helmet plumes.
The battle lines cried out on either side as if the town
was all in flames; and Murrus dragged along on torpid limbs,
afraid in the shadow of death and prayed his final prayer,
"Lord Hercules, our founder, we dwell in the sacred land
your footsteps trod, avert this threatening hurricane,
if I defend your city walls with no slothful hand."
And while he prayed and lifted suppliant eyes to the sky,
then Hannibal, "Observe whether Tiryns' sometime lord
may not more justly favour us. Unless a rival's skill's
unwelcome, Hercules, then recognize in me a match for your
young years, invincible one, and align your power divine
with me, and, remembered as the first to sack the town of Troy,
be my right hand as I destroy the line that fled from Troy."
Thus Hannibal at once in fury seized his sword and drove
it home until the hilt stuck fast, and then withdrew his blade
to drench his dreadful armour with the blood of the dying man.
Provoked by the great man's fall at once the fighting youth
rushed forward to save the famous warrior's arms and corpse
from the victor's grasp; their numbers grow as they urge
each other on with mutual support, and *en masse* advance.
Then Hannibal's helmet rang with rocks, his shield of bronze
with javelins; men attack with stakes and vie as they swing
and sling lead weights. The plume is from his helmet shorn
and that glorious crest that nodded over his dead destroyed.
Now sweat is forced to flow in streams across his flesh,
his breastplate sports a porcupine of bristling spears.
There's no respite to change his armour 'neath the hail of blows.
His knees begin to sink, his arms to slip from nerveless hands.
A constant stream of vapour is drawn from deep within,
escaping parched lips, and a groan of panting effort is heard,
forced out to fracture mute against the metal of his helm.
Just so the thunderous boar when driven by the baying hounds
of Sparta and deprived of the forest by the hunters in his path,
makes bristle the hair on his back to fight his final fight,
with mingled blood and foam in his champing mouth,
and grunts as he strikes twin tusks against the spears.
Of a mind to overcome adversity and rejoice in a show
of valour Hannibal weighs risks against the prize of praise.
Of a sudden then the sky was split amid the close packed clouds,
a thunderclap shook the earth, and above the battle lines
Lord Jupiter twice shattered the air with doubled bolt.
Next hummed through the clouds with turbine blast,
unseen, a spear to punish an unjust war, a spear
whose hurtling point lodged in the front of Hannibal's thigh.

Tarpeian crags and rocks inhabited by gods, and you,
the flames that ever glow on the Vestals' shrine in Rome,
how much false hope the sight of that deceptive shaft
accorded you! For, if that spear had pierced the warrior's thigh
more deeply, the Alps would still remain uncrossed by man,
nor would Allia's toll have been surpassed by Trasimene's[11].
But Juno, looking on from the peak of the lofty Pyrenees,
observed his youthful energy and his passion for war
and when she saw the wound inflicted by the flying spear,
made haste through the sky, enclosed in a darkling cloud,
and plucked the spear's weight from out the tough bone.
With his shield he hid the blood that flowed down his legs,
retreating from the rampart, and by stages he dragged
his faltering steps away, no trust in his physical strength.

At last the night submerged in welcome shade both land
and sea and, all light gone, put a stop to their hostilities.
Stout hearts maintained a vigil and rebuilt the wall,
a night long task. Extremity of peril sharp set the besieged
and at the last their courage in disaster grew more fierce.
Here young boys and enfeebled elders, here womenfolk
competed in their distress to complete the wretched task,
while soldiers, wounds still wet, transported masonry.
The duty of the senators and leading senior men was clear.
In hurried consultation they selected certain men and urged
and begged them to take control in this critical time, to restore
the state and plead for Roman arms in their extremity.
"Go quickly – speed your ship with both oars and sail,
the while the wounded beast is confined to camp. We must
exploit this break in the war and out of peril strive for fame.
Go quickly, praise our loyalty and lament our ruined walls
and bring a better fate from our ancestral home.
Our final charge: return before our city of Saguntum falls!"
The envoys then make haste to the nearest stretch of shore
and flee with swollen sail across the foam and dark blue sea.
Dawn, blushing spouse of Tithonus, was banishing sleep,
while her rosy steeds had breathed upon the mountains high,
with daybreak's neighing cry and pulled taught the roseate reins.
Now high up from the walls and the battlement raised, the men
of Saguntum point out their city and its night built parapets.
The business of war was suspended, the siege put on hold
by the grieving troops, the zeal for fighting delayed,
as their careful thoughts turned to their leader's grim plight.
Meanwhile the delegates had traversed the ocean wide
and above the sea the hills of Hercules began to show,
as they raised their cloudy crags from the ridge of Monaco.
Here Thracian Boreas[12] alone inhabits the rocks, a dread domain,

[11] The meaning is that the most costly prior butchers' bill from the battle between the Gauls and Romans at the Allia (390 BCE) would not have been surpassed by that inflicted on the Romans by Hannibal at Lake Trasimene.

attacking always as now the shores with freezing blast,
assails now the Alps themselves with strident wings;
and when from the frozen north he pours across the lands
no other wind has confidence enough to challenge him.
With whirlwind gust he churns the sea and broken waves
breathe foam, as mountains are swamped by mountainous seas;
in headlong spate he lifts both Rhine and Rhone to the clouds.
Escaping from the north wind's dreadful rage the delegates
then contemplate, discuss the shocks and dubious chance
of both woeful war and the sea – what will the outcome be?
"Saguntum, famous home of loyalty, where lies now
your fate? Does the sacred citadel still stand on its acropolis?
Or, gods above, are ashes the last remains of your famous name?
Bring us light airs and inspire a favouring wind, if the fire
of Carthage does not already burn triumphant in our shrines,
and if the fleets of Rome have power to help us still!"
With such complaints they wept both night and day away,
until their ship was brought at last to the shores of Latium,
where Father Tiber runs down with yellow flood to the sea,
his stream enriched by the tribute won from Anio's flow.
From here they come to the walls of their kinsmen of Rome.
The consul convened the worshipful assembly of elders blessed
with spotless poverty, their names acquired, enhanced by victories,
the senate, the men who rivalled the very gods in excellence.
Whole hearted deeds and a sacred craving for right and the rule
of law inspired these men; their dress unkempt and diet crude,
their hands, fresh turned from the plough were fit for the sword;
pleased easily with little, their hearts disinterested in wealth,
they often left behind their chariot to return to their humble homes.
At the temple's threshold and hard by the sacred gates were hung
the spoils of warfare, captured chariots and armour seized
from hostile chieftains and battle axes lethal in the fray,
shields pierced and spears encrusted still with blood and bolts
that had fastened city gates. You see here the Punic wars,
the spoil of Lilybaeum[13], the prows of ships, mute testament
that Carthage's fleet had been driven defeated from the sea.
Here lay Gallic helmets and Brennus' contemptuous sword,
the arbiter of ransom gold[14], and the arms brought back
by Camillus, triumphant, when the Gauls had fled the Capitol.
Here too the Epirote spoils from Pyrrhus, him of Achilles' line,
and plumed Ligurian helms, crude light weight shields
brought back from Spanish tribes and Alpine javelins.
But when the sorry state of the suppliants revealed their fate
and their deadly war, then a vision of Saguntum herself
appeared, petitioning *in extremis*, before the Senate's inner eye.
And then the elder, Sicoris, began his sad complaint,

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[12] The cold north wind.

[13] See note on v. 35.

[14] Duff (qv) *ad loc.* 'In 390 B.C. the Senones, a Gallic tribe, took Rome and burnt it. The Romans paid gold for a ransom; and when the gold was being weighed Brennus, the leader of the Gauls, threw his sword into scale as a gesture of contempt. Brennus was afterward defeated by Camillus.'

"Race famed for sacred loyalty, which men defeated once
by your sword confess you born from the line of Mars,
do not believe we lightly risked the sea's immensity.
We have seen our city under siege, its walls atremble –
we have seen Hannibal, born of seas insane or of some union
of monstrous beasts. Gods keep him distant from these walls,
I pray, and keep the young man's death dealing hand engaged
in war with us alone! The force with which he hurls tree trunks
re-echoing! How great his stature grows in the battle line!
Impatient of the Ebro's boundary he crossed the Pyrenees,
disturbed Gibraltar, aroused the peoples hidden in the sands
of the Syrtis – his quest for more and greater city walls.
This foaming tidal wave, arising in the ocean's midst,
will inundate your cities should you refuse to hinder it.
And shall Saguntum, conquered and in thrall to his rule,
be prize enough for this youth, precipitating wars he swore
to wage, a match for his schemes and sword torn treaties smashed.
Move quickly, men of Rome, to snuff out this nascent flame,
or else the threat will grow to outstrip your tardy fears.
And yet were there no threat to you and the hidden sparks
of war were not yet smouldering, would you refuse
to lend a kindred hand to the folk of your Saguntum?
All Spain and all of savage Gaul with its hordes
of swift horse threatens us and all of torrid Africa.
By the time honoured origins of the Rutulian race,
by the lares of Laurentum and mother Troy's firm guarantee[15],
keep safe those pious men, who were forced to leave
Ardea's walls in exchange for the pillars of Hercules[16].
You aided noble Zancle against the Sicilian force
of Hiero, tyrant of Syracuse; you thought it right
for your forebears from Troy to defend the walls
of Capua, drive off the Samnite force. I once dwelled
in Italy, bear witness springs and secret streams of Numicus[17],
when Ardea was too rich in men and sent away its youth,
and carrying the sacred things, the inner shrine of Turnus' house,
my ancestor, I brought Laurentum's name beyond the Pyrenees.
Why should we be scorned like limbs ripped, torn from a corpse,
why should the treaty be washed clean with our blood spilled?"
At last they finished their plea and, sad to see, they dashed
their unkempt bodies prone upon the ground, their hands
held up in supplication, their clothes all ragged and torn.
The senators then took urgent, worried counsel over their concerns.
And Lentulus, as if he saw Saguntum's burning homes, required
a demand be made to punish Hannibal and to launch
a sudden and destructive war upon the land of Carthage.
But Fabius, a man more cautious and mindful of future events,

[15] The statue of Pallas brought from Troy to Rome was thought to assure the safety of the city in which it dwelled.

[16] Leave Ardea, founded in Italy by Danae, daughter of Acrisius, for Saguntum, hard by the Pillars of Hercules, i.e. Gibraltar.

[17] The Numicus was a small river in Latium by which Aeneas was thought to be buried.

who took no joy in dubious enterprise, was loath to wage war,
but war declared was skilled, sword sheathed, at prolonging it,
said next that in such grave affairs they should first ascertain
if Hannibal's madness alone had begun the war, or if the chiefs
of Carthage had decreed hostilities. Envoys should learn the facts.
Like some prophet the provident Fabius contemplated the war
to come and poured out his advice from the depths of his soul.
Just so the master mariner, keeping watch from his lofty bridge,
foretelling from tell tale signs that a north west storm is due to fall
upon his sails, immediately reefs them in on the mainmast top.
But the mix of grief and rage and pain impelled them all
to precipitate events unknown; ambassadors were picked
to confront Hannibal, but if the general maintained hostilities,
was deaf to their words, they then should turn their steps
to Carthage, and wage war without delay on such an impious race.

Punica: Book 2

Silius Italicus

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Book 2

The Roman envoys go to Carthage having been snubbed by Hannibal (1-24). Hannibal rallies his men and prosecutes the siege (25-269). In Carthage the Roman envoys address the senate and after debate Fabius declares war (270-390). Hannibal suppresses mutinous tribes and returns to Saguntum (391-456). Hercules, founder of Saguntum, sends Fides to urge the people to resist (457-525). Juno sends a Fury from Hell to drive the population mad (526-649). They build a great pyre on which to destroy the wealth of the city, which Hannibal captures (650-695). The deathless fame of the Saguntines is celebrated by the poet (696-707).

Already now upon the cerulean deeps a Roman ship sailed out,
and carried the great hearted senate's stern decrees, and with them
its leading men. One Fabius, of Hercules' Tirynthian line,
could number thrice one hundred kin swept off on a single day
by the storms of war, when Fortune stained Cremera's banks
with blood and set her face against patrician enterprise[1].
In company with Fabius went one Publicola to share his task,
a Sabine he, who claimed descent from mighty Volesus.[2]
His name denotes a friendship for the plebeian folk of Rome,
a name inherited from a forebear, a former man of consular rank[3].

When Hannibal heard these men had harbour made and furled
their sails and brought the senate's decree demanding peace,
belatedly - although the war already raged, and as well
the general's punishment was fixed to the match the settlement,
at once he ordered troops of armoured cavalry to show themselves
along the shore, displaying standards grim and shields
fresh steeped in blood and spears all red with recent gore.
"The time for talk is past," he declared, "and the land resounds
with the trumpet blasts of war and the cries of those who fell.
While they may, let them put to sea again, and not swell in haste
the ranks besieged; we know the nature and extent of rage allowed,
when arms are warmed by blood, and what the sword may dare."
And so, repelled by Hannibal's speech along the hostile shores,
the Romans turned their course to Carthage and its senate house.

As the ship unfurled its sails upon the deep then Hannibal
raised, shook his fist and declared, "It is my head, *my* head,
lord Jupiter, which that ship desires to carry across the sea!
A curse on minds that are blind, and hearts puffed up by victories!

[1] This man is the famous Q. Fabius Maximus Cunctator who figures later in the poem. In 480 BCE a band of three hundred or so of the Fabii with 4,000 clients were defeated on the banks of the Cremera in Etruria by the forces of Veii. According to Duff's note *ad loc.* only a single individual survived.
[2] Volesus was the founder of the Valerian family. The name Publicola means 'friend of the people'.
[3] One of Volesus' descendants gained the name Publicola and consular rank in 509 BCE.

That impious land seeks punishment for Hannibal under arms!
I will come unasked, and you will have your fill of me,
and of a sudden, Rome, who now defends a foreigner's gods,
yourself will fear for your own sacred hearths and homes.
Once more you may ascend the steep Tarpeian rocks
and crags,[4] and take refuge in your lofty citadel,
but not pay gold this time to ransom captive lives."

These words inflamed his troops, added fury to their arms.
At once storm clouds of missiles filled the sky,
Saguntum's walls resounded to hail after hail of rocks.
The soldiers' zeal drove them on to war, the ship in its flight
was witness, until it could no more descry the battlements.
And Hannibal himself, in plain sight, his wound exposed,
demands of his bellicose troops the promised sacrifice,
and, repeating his complaints in frenzied tones, declares,
"I am their prize, my friends, and Fabius displays the chains
from the deck. His sovereign senate rages for my head!
If you are weary of our task, believe our war unjust,
make haste to summon back that ship from the sea.
At once deliver me for torture with my wrists in chains.
Though I derive my line from Belus of the East, am enclosed
by a host of allies drawn from Spain and Africa alike,
why should I refuse the role of slave? No, let the Roman rule
in perpetuity, spread his savage empire through both space
and time; let us tremble at their rule and whim!"
His warriors groan out loud and redirect his gloomy words
against Aeneas' sons and hone their rage with battle cries.

Amidst the flowing robed Libyans and their bilingual folk[5],
there came to fight the Romans Asbyte, daughter bold
of Garamantian Hiarbas, with a host of African troops[6].
Her grandfather was Ammon, who ruled the caves of Medea,
the child of Phorcys, and the Macae beside the river Cinyps,
and the son scorched sons of Cyrene with wide imperium;
his subjects are the Nasimones and Barce, drought plagued,
beside the woods of Autololes and perfidious Syrtes' shifting shore,
and Gaetulian light cavalry, guiding their steeds with but their knees.
And Ammon had built a nuptial suite for Tritonis, the nymph,
from whom the king's daughter was born, claiming Jove
as ancestor, and she took her name from the prophet's grove.
She never knew a man, accustomed to a lonesome couch,
but spent her early life devoted to the forest and the hunt;
her hand did not grow lanolin soft at the spindle or loom,
but she loved Diana and the woods, urged on her breathless horse
with her heels, delighting in merciless slaughter of beasts.

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[4] As the Romans did in 390 BC at the time of the invasion of the Gauls.
[5] Bilingual since they spoke both Egyptian and Libyan.
[6] I have resisted the temptation to match in the body of the translation Silius' affection for the more abstruse labels for peoples and places. One of the more extreme examples is to be found in v. 51, where 'Rhoeteius is used as a synonym for Roman, when the name derives from a promontory in the Troad.

Just so the Thracian Amazons traverse Mt Rhodope
and Pangaeus' stony ridges high and more than match the rush
of Hebrus, a virgin band who spurns all suitors, Getae and Cicones,
Rhesus' house, and the Bistones, armed with crescent shields.

Distinctive in her native garb, her flowing hair tied back
with the Hesperides' golden gift, her right flank bared and free
for savage war, her other side aglitter with Amazonian shield
to protect and guard against the perils of the battlefield,
she urged her chariot on 'till the axle hubs smoked with speed.
Some comrades drove two horse chariots, while others rode
horseback; of the princess' escort some had suffered the yoke
of Venus, but the greater number of them were virgins still.
Close by the mound she showed off her team before the battle line;
she circled the plain and, hurling her spinning darts through the air,
she planted them on the topmost parts of the citadel.

She sorely tried the patience of old Mopsus as again and again
her spears invaded the walls and from the battlements he sped
his Cretan shafts from his singing bow through the liquid air
to deal death dealing wounds with winged steel.
He was from Crete and had left the caverns of sounding brass[7]
of the Curetes and as a youngster, Mopsus, in more nimble years
was used to beat the undergrowth of Dicte[8] with his feathered shafts.
He brought down oft the wandering bird from the skies,
would check with far flung shot the stag that escaped
the nets along the plain; and the beast would collapse and fall,
unexpectedly struck down before the string of the bow was mute.
And then Crete could justly boast of Mopsus' skill with the bow,
although she might be challenging the Parthians' eastern skills.
But straightened circumstance denied a life spent at the hunt
and poverty drove him far away across the seas with his wife,
yes, Meroë, and his sons, to become a humble guest friend
into hapless Saguntum, his life led on by the dictates of fate.
And from the brothers' shoulders also hung the shafts
and quivers of their sire, the winged steel of Minoan choice.
Then flanked by his sons this Mopsus rained on the ranks
of African troops a storm of arrows from his Cretan bow.
Already he had brought down Garamus and Thyrus the bold,
and Gisgo, matching savage Bagas' charge, and Lixus too -
his beardless cheeks did not deserve to face such unerring fire –
and Mopsus, his quiver refilled, continued the fight.
Then, turning his gaze and shaft upon the virgin's face, he called
upon the Jove he had left behind[9], but Jove ignored his pleas,
for, when a Nasimonian maid saw the turn of the fatal bow,
she set her body to intercept itself the far flung threat,
anticipated herself the fatal, flying shaft, which, as she cried

[7] The infant Jupiter was hidden away from Saturn in the caves of Crete where his childish cries were masked by the clashing cymbals and shields of the Curetes, his guardians.
[8] Dicte was a mountain in eastern Crete.
[9] Mopsus' native Crete had been the birthplace of Jupiter.

aloud, she received as it entered her gaping mouth to pierce
her neck – its jutting steel observed at the first by her friends.
Enraged at her comrade's fall the virgin warrior raised her limbs
from where they fell, and rinsed with tears her eyes that swam
with failing light, then strained with all the strength of grief
to hurl her whirling javelin against the city walls.
It flew and of a sudden pierced Dorylas' shoulder through
and through, as he strove to let fly the steel to the winds
with loosened thumb, the tips of the bow quite touching now,
the shaft now filling the space of the full drawn string…
The sudden wound projected him headlong from the high
city walls, and as he fell there fell beside him arrows spilled
from his quiver, turned and emptying out in its fall.
His brother, Icarus, in arms close by cried out aloud
and strove to seek revenge for this pitiful death,
but as he readied his weapon in haste for the fray,
lord Hannibal stopped him dead with a whirling rock.
His limbs grew sluggish and icy cold as they fell,
while his failing hand returned to the quiver its shafts.

But father Mopsus at the death of both his sons three times
snatched up his bow in grief and rage – three times it fell
from his hand, as grief purloined his customary skill.
He grieved too late he had left his well loved household gods,
in eager haste snatched up the rock that had felled you, Icarus,
but when his old man's strength, he realised, would fail to smash
his chest, frustrated that his good right arm could not procure
by death relief from overwhelming grief, he flung himself
headlong from the mighty tower and in his heavy fall
extended dying limbs above the body of his son.

And while the Cretan stranger fell in a foreign war,
already Theron, the guard of Hercules' temple and priest
at his altar, urging on his soldiers, made a fresh initiative.
Unbarring the gates he dispatched a squad of troops to join
the bitter battle when the Carthaginians least expected it.
No spear in hand nor helmet on his head, he put his trust
in his width of shoulder and young man's bulk, and felt
no need for a sword as he smashed men down with his club.
He wore a hunter's spoils, a lion's skin, to cover the top
of his head, where the lion's mask gaped a dreadful grin.
On his shield he bore a hundred snakes and Lerna's beast,
the Hydra, whose severed heads would multiply.
He forced from the walls both Juba and Thapsus his sire,
and Micipsa, renowned in lineage, and Saces the Moor,
then drove them headlong and in disarray to the shore -
the sea foamed blood with the work of his good right hand.
Not content with the deaths of Idus and Marmarican Cotho,
nor with the slaughter of Jugurtha and of Rothus both,
he coveted Asbytes' chariot and the glittering cloak
that covered her and her shield all studded with gems,

so turned all his attention to her, the warrior maid,
and when the princess saw him charge with bloodied sword,
she swerved her team of horse aside to the left to carve
her deceptive course across the field and, like a bird,
is sped away by her wheeling chariot across the plain.
And as she disappeared from sight, the hooves of her team,
more swift than the wind, dragged clouds of dust across the plain,
her echoing wheels crushed enemy ranks on either side,
and the maiden rained spears after spear upon their distress.
Here Lycus fell and Thamyris too, Eurydamas, his name
a noble one, and he born the son of noble stock;
his sire, poor fool, had once aspired to wed a noble wife,
the wife of Ulysses, but had been fooled by her chaste arts,
as her loom's deceitful designs were nightly undone,
and loud his boast that Ulysses was dead, was drowned
at sea, but Ulysses did him to babbling death in very truth,
and turned the would be marriage torch to a funeral pyre.
The last of his line was destroyed on the fields of Spain
by the hand of the African queen, whose chariot held
its course to thunder on over his shattering bones.

And now the maiden returned to where she saw Theron
embroiled in the fray and, hefting her battle axe, she aimed
for his central brow, and vowed great spoils for you,
Diana – your prize the skin of Hercules' great cat.
Nor yet did Theron hang back in his lust for renown,
but rose to his full height before her team and thrust
the tawny mane of the lion's mask at their terrified eyes.
The horses, horrified then by this unprecedented dread,
those awful jaws, threw the heavy chariot upon its side.
Then as Asbyte leapt to try to flee the fight, Theron
anticipated her and clubbed her squarely on the head,
and spattered the glowing wheels and terror tangled reins
with brains that spilled from her crushed and broken skull.
He grasped her axe and eager then to flaunt his kill
decapitated her corpse as it tumbled from the chariot.
Nor yet was his anger spent: he fixed her head upon a lofty pike
for all to see and bad men carry it before the enemy ranks,
then turn their chariots in haste towards the city walls.
Quite blind to fate and the fleeting favour of gods
Theron pressed on with the fight as death drew near.
For Hannibal was there, his face a study in menace and rage,
as he grieved in his heart for the fallen Asbyte's fate
and for the speechless horror of the dreadful trophy head.
As soon as the brazen boss on his shield blazed forth,
and the armour encasing his limbs so swift from afar
thundered death, in terrified flight of a sudden the troops
turned tail to hasten their course to the walls of the town.
Just so the eventide sends birds, light winged, through night's
twilight from feeding grounds to their familiar nests;
or when a rain cloud’s threat upon Hymettus scares

the swarming, scattered bees, they hurry back to their
sweet honeycombs and hives of fragrant waxen cork
weighed down with nectar and in dense packed swarms
join forces by the entrance to the hive – a humming mass.
Just so dread drove the soldiers into blind, headlong retreat.
Such the hold of sweet life over men! Death holds such fears
and yet is fated and bound to come from the day of our birth.
They curse their enterprise and lament they rushed to leave
the gates and safety of the walls; scarce can Theron check
his troops either by main force or sometime shouted threats:
“Hold fast, men! That enemy belongs to me! Hold fast!
A great fights' fame awaits me! With this right hand I'll rid
Saguntum's walls and homes of Carthage, the while you act
as merely audience! Or if consuming fear – a sorry sight –
impels you all within the walls, then close the gates on me!”

But Hannibal's swift course was aimed impetuous against
the battlements - while Theron's men despaired their plight
and safety - his first intent to breach the city walls and then
at last to indulge in slaughter and battle delayed, but when
the eager priest of Hercules observed this plan he leapt
ahead, anxiety speeding his course to anticipate the foe.
The Carthaginian's berserker rage redoubled then:
“Pay me the price of death,” he said, “good guardian
of the gates, so that those gates may thereby be undone!”
His rage does not allow of further speech and he hefts
his shining blade; the young Saguntine, though, hurled first
his club with mighty force and his enemy's armour rang
out loud at the blow, and the knotted mass of the club
rebounded high as it struck upon the hollowed bronze.
His weapon lost and betrayed by this unsuccessful strike
then Theron speedily took to his heels in hasty flight
and, swift of foot, ran all around the city walls.
In hot pursuit the victor hurled abuse at his retreating back.
From the lofty top of the city's walls the matrons lament,
their voices raised in grief; they call the young man's name
and wish they could throw wide the gates for him in his distress,
yet even as they shout encouragement dread shakes
their hearts that they may also welcome in their mighty foe.
Then Hannibal fells the tiring man with his shield, leaps upon him
as he falls, and boasts to the crowd who watch from the walls,
“Go, console Asbyte's sorrow with your impending death!”
And as he spoke he buried his fatal sword in Theron's throat,
a man now ready to die, and joyful drove from the walls
the stolen royal team of horse with which the timorous band
had blocked all access to the city's gates and quite victorious
he drove his speeding chariot between the cheering ranks.

The Numidian troops, grief stricken, made haste to fulfil
the melancholy task of burial and honour Asbyte with a pyre:
the dead man's corpse they dragged three times round her remains.

And then they cast the warrior's lethal club and dreadful mask
upon the flames; and when the face and beard had been
consumed, they left the ravaged corpse to the vultures of Spain.

Meanwhile the most powerful men among the Carthaginians,
debating the state of the war and what word should be sent
to the people of Rome, were nervous because of the threat
the ambassadors posed. Some were moved by the treaty sworn
and by the gods that witnessed it, the oaths their parents made,
others by their shared love for young Hannibal's heroic plans,
and their hopes for success in war, but Hanno[10], long time
the leader's ancestral and hateful opponent, rebuked
their zeal[11] in these words and their ill considered devotion,
"The total situation inhibits, gentlemen, my freedom of speech,
since my enemies' angry threats are quite unrestrained,
but I will not hesitate, although their weapons threaten death.
I shall call the gods above to witness and leave a legacy
of advice about our country's needs in this situation dire.
And it is not just now while Saguntum is besieged and burns
that Hanno sings his mantic song. I have revealed before
my heartfelt cares, advised against your nurturing on campaign
that lethal individual, and shall so advise while I have breath,
recognizing his congenital malevolence and inbred desires,
just as the weatherman observes the constellations in the sky
at night to predict for the wretched sailors the raging storm
that threatens at sea and the imminent blast of the Nor' west wind.
Hannibal has usurped the throne and the reins of government:
the rupture of the treaty by war has ruptured in turn all decorum,
and cities are shaken, while Aeneas' descendants far off
are roused against our Carthage, and the peace is overthrown.
A father's ghost and his enraged avenging spirit drive the youth,
also that wretched oath[12], and gods that took the traitor's side
on the breach of the treaty and the priestess of Massilia[13].
Now, blinded by the fog of power, are these *foreign* towns
that Hannibal assails? At this point in time, I say, he targets you
and your city walls, the walls of Carthage, not Saguntum's walls,
at all, a crime for which he might atone with his own
proper punishment, might atone without embroiling us!
We soaked the valleys of Sicily with brave warrior blood,
and even with Spartan help could scarce prosecute the war[14].
We filled the caves of Scylla with the wreckage of our ships[15]

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[10] See Duff's historical note *ad loc.* 'Hanno, surnamed The Great, was a Carthaginian general and statesman, who possessed great influence in the Carthaginian senate, and always used it to oppose Hamilcar, and Hamilcar's sons,
Hannibal and Hasdrubal.'

[11] 'Rebuked their zeal' is taken from Duff's translation.

[12] See, 1.81-139.

[13] This is the priestess in the presence of whom in Dido's temple Hamilcar mad his son swear the binding and fatal oath.

[14] In the First Punic War Spartan troops under Xanthippus came to the aid of the Carthaginians in Sicily and were instrumental in the defeat of the Roman general Regulus, (258BC).

[15] See 1.35.

and saw our fleet snatched away as the sea withdrew,
Charybdis vomiting our rowing benches from the deep.
Consider, fool, the Aegatian isles, consider, godless one,
the far flung maritime parts of Libya's domain.
What rash ambition! Celebrity sought by Carthage's death?
The mighty Alps will no doubt subside at the sight
of a young man's arms, as will the lofty Apennines
that lift their snowy heads to match the Alpine mass.
Suppose, though, fool, you make the plains – are the men
of Rome but mortal souls? Nor flame nor sword can weary them.
You will find your battle's not with mere Saguntine stock.
Their troops mature while on campaign. Their cheeks
as yet unmarked by downy gold are calloused by the helm.
Nor does old age acknowledge rest. Their veterans, battle-scarred
from length of service, stand in the front line to challenge death.
I myself have seen a Roman soldier, pierced quite through
the body, rip out the offending spear and hurl it at the foe.
I have seen their courage in the face of death, their lust for fame.
If Carthage objects to the war, does not hand herself to Rome
the victor, then, Hanno, how much of her blood will you save?"

Gestar replied to this – and, impatient and harsh of spirit,
had long been brewing bitter rage, had twice already tried
to interrupt, disrupt the orator's speech in mid flow,
"By the gods, does a soldier of Rome," he asked, "attend
the council of Libya and the Carthaginian senate house?
He does not carry arms, but is otherwise our patent enemy.
He threatens us now with both the Alps and Apennines,
with the Sicilian sea and then with the surge of Scylla's shore.
He fears almost the spirits and shades of the Roman dead –
so great his eulogy built upon the wounds and modes
of death of these men, whose race he extols to the stars!
So be his heart is chilled and trembles with base fear,
the enemy, we confront, believe me, is mortal, mortal, I say.
I myself have seen the hope and trusted servant of Rome,
yes, Regulus, both hands chained tight behind his back,
and dragged towards the dark of his dungeon, the crowd
triumphant shouting. I saw him when, suspended high
on his oaken cross, he gazed and gazed again on Italy.
Nor yet do boyish cheeks beneath a helmet rouse
my fears, nor heads weighed down with precocious steel.
We are no sluggards ourselves! Observe how many Libyan
troops strive for work beyond their sum of years
and go to war bareback. Our general himself is proof,
who when first his gentle mouth uttered childish speech,
promised war and trumpet call, to consume with flame
the men of Rome, and relived in play his father's victories.
And so let the Alps kiss the sky and the Apennines lift
their snowy crags to the stars; through rock and snow
(and I shall make an idle boast to prick an evil mind)
and through the sky a path will open. A shame to quail

before the route that Hercules trod and to fear an equal fame.
Hanno exaggerates our failures, firestorms of a former war,
when he repeats his injunction against taking on the fight
for liberty. Let him lay aside his eruptions of dread,
play rather the part of a woman, pacific, and keep his sobs
to himself in his house, while we set forth against the foe,
our fixed intent to drive away, god willing or no,
the Roman tyrant from the heights of Tyrian Carthage,
but if the fates fight against us, and Mars has damned
and abandoned Carthage, then I prefer to fall, shall not
consign my famous fatherland to endless slavery, free spirited
shall rather look on Acheron. For, gods above, what are Fabius'
demands? "Lay down your arms! Leave Saguntum's captive walls!
The pick of your troops should pile and burn their shields,
your fleet should be burned and nevermore venture the sea!"
O ye gods, ward off such a criminal fate from Carthage!
She has not deserved such a battering! Refuse to tie
our general's hands!" He then resumed his seat. The senators
were then empowered to vote according to customary law,
at which point Hanno demands the return of the spoils
of war, and also of Hannibal, who first violated the pact.
The senators then leapt to their feet as if in shock, as if
some enemy had invaded the temple, and prayed to the gods
to turn the evil prophecy on Rome herself. When Fabius saw
the house divided and that treacherous minds were keen
for war, no more could he manage to control his chagrin,
demanded a speedy decision, and, order restored, he said
he carried a choice of peace or war in his lap, so they, he told
them, should make their choice and not fallaciously deceive him –
the angry senators, though, refused assent to either course,
then, as if from his heart he were pouring pent up battle and arms:
"Accept a war, the death of Libya, and in its outcome a match
to the prior event," he declared and, unfurling his robes,
again sought his native citadel, bearing news of impending war.

While this unruly debate unfolded in exiled Dido's town,
lord Hannibal made haste to plunder those tribes whose trust
was failing and sick and, with much booty weighed down,
recalled his troops to return to the walls of Saguntum.

But see! The dwellers of the Atlantic coast brought gifts
for Hannibal, a shield that shone with menacing sheen,
the work of Gallicia's land[16], a shining helm interwoven
with plumes, with feathers alive with flutter and nods,
vibrating upon its lofty white crest, the colours of snow;
a sword and a single spear to beget a myriad deaths;
a knotted triple layered leathern cuirass, embossed
with gold, a defence impenetrable 'gainst any thrust.
These arms were finished throughout in bronze

[16] This area is now in the northern parts of modern Portugal, beyond the river Douro, and was famed for its wealth in rare metals, especially gold.

and tough steel, beautified with all the wealth that flows
in Tagus' s stream. He surveyed each piece with eyes
that were glad, delighted in Carthage's origins displayed.

For thereon Dido raised the citadels of Carthage's origins.
Her crews had beached their fleet to work at various tasks:
here some enclose the port with moles, while you, Bitias, a man
long honoured for your fairness distribute dwellings and homes.
Some men display the head of a war-horse excavated while
they dug and they greet the portent with shouts of acclamation.
Amongst these scenes one could see Aeneas, despoiled
of his men and ships, cast ashore by the sea, his right
hand raised in prayer. The ill-fated queen kept hungry watch
upon him, her brow serene, her gaze already filled with love.
Gallaecian[17] hands next fashioned the cave and furtive tryst
of the lovers; the din and baying of hounds rose up and up
to the skies, while frightened by the sudden storm
the troop of mounted huntsmen took refuge in the woods.
Aeneas's fleet is depicted not far off, away from the shore,
and seeking the open sea despite Elissa's[18] fruitless pleas.
Here Dido herself stands wounded on a massive funeral pyre
and enjoins the future men of Tyre[19] to wage a vengeful war.
The Trojan meanwhile sees the blazing pyre from out at sea
but spreads wide his sails in search of a mightier destiny.

Elsewhere Hannibal plays suppliant at the altars of the dead,
and with the Stygian priestess pours secret libations of blood,
swears ever to wage war on Rome from his earliest youth.
Old Hamilcar is there, triumphant in the fields of Sicily –
you might think him alive as he roused debilitating war,
such the fire in his eyes, his image grim and threatening.

Also a cohort of Spartans filled the left side of the shield,
depicted in harsh relief. Victorious Xanthippus, come
from Amyclae, the city of Leda, led their triumphant band.
Close by, beneath in the picture of his punishment, hangs
in noble agony Regulus, a loyal object lesson for Saguntum's men.
But here a happier scene of stampeded herds of wild
beasts, shown in the glittering metal beside nomadic homes.
Not far away the feral sunburned sister of a negroid Moor
spoke soothing words to lionesses in her native tongue.
The shepherd roams freely on the plain where his flocks
range also freely, quite unconfined, to seek their feed.
As usual his goods pursue the Punic guardian of the herds:
his javelins, his barking Cretan hound, his hut, the spark of fire
in the veins of flint and the pipes of reed his cows know well.
Saguntum stood out conspicuous, rising on its towering hill,
and all around the city swarmed the vast encircling crowds,

[17] The word is derived from a tribe and an area of north west Spain. Its significance here is uncertain.
[18] Elissa is an alternative name for Dido.
[19] The Carthaginians are meant, whose original home was Tyre.

packed ranks of combatants, bombarding her with quivering spears.
On the shield's outer edge the Ebro's stream was in spate,
enclosing within its winding curves the world of the shield.
The treaty wrecked, then Hannibal had crossed its banks
and summoned the Carthaginians to a war with Rome.
Exalted by such a gift he fitted the ringing armour plate
to his shoulders broad and standing tall, he spoke,
"What gouts of Roman blood will drench these arms of mine!
What penalties the senate, the self-styled arbiter of war[20], will pay!"

And now the enemy under siege grew ever more weak, the days
that passed eroded the town, while the citizens, exhausted, awaited
the standards and soldiers of Rome. At length they turned their gaze
away from the empty sea, abandoned that deceitful shore
and saw their final hours at hand. Long time an intimate bane
had battened on their very marrow to drain the citizens dry.
Long hidden famine consumed their wretched, obstinate flesh
with slow and lingering decay and burned away their veins,
all bloodless now. Their eyeballs were sunken, taking flight
in cheeks become emaciate, their bones, masked only by skin,
were ghastly, ill strung by quivering arteries, while the flesh
on their limbs was utterly consumed, a dreadful sight to see.
In their distress they sought for comfort in the night
time dews and dampened soil and laboured in vain
to press some semblance of wet from desiccated wood.
They sank to shameful depths. The rabid hunger pangs
demanded unaccustomed food. Stripping the hide
from naked shields they chewed the leather coverings.

From heaven's heights Tirynthian Hercules observed
these things and wept at the hapless state of the broken town.
Both dread of his mighty father and Jupiter's commands
not to oppose his vicious stepmother's[21] plans restrained him.
Therefore, keeping his purpose hid he quickly made his way
to the home of sacred Fides[22] to test the secrets of her heart.
The goddess delighted in solitude and was then far away
in heaven, pondering the weighty concerns of the gods;
with great respect the hero of Nemea[23] spoke to her,
"Begotten before Jove, admired by men and gods alike,
without whom peace cannot be known on land or sea,
consort of Justice and the silent voice of conscience,
can you observe the dread destruction of your town –
Saguntum – quite unmoved, a city that suffers a host
of penalties defending you? For you the people die,
while mothers, overcome by want, their mens' sad pleas,
and their children's first words, appeal to you alone.

[20] Hannibal declares that the Roman senate has no jurisdiction as to with whom Carthage wages war.
[21] Juno.
[22] The goddess Loyalty.
[23] Hercules had killed a monstrous lion that was terrorizing the area of Nemea. He skinned the beast and ever after wore its pelt and mask as impenetrable armour.

Bring help from the skies to lift them out of despair."

So said Alcumena's son, to whom the virgin deity replied,
"Of course I see, and the breaking of treaties is my concern!
A future day of vengeance is fixed for these grim crimes.
It was, however, the human race, so rich in villainy, that drove
me out, abandoning in haste the wicked realms of the earth,
to come and settle here in this new home. I left behind
the impious lands who fear as much as they are feared,
I fled the lust for gold and the vile rewards of iniquity,
as well as these the horrid nations that lived like wild
beasts, robbed by luxury of decency, all sense of shame
suppressed in the long and lasting nights of decadence!
And violence is worshipped. The sword usurps the place
of law and virtue yields to crime. Behold the nations!
No one is innocent! Shared guilt preserves the peace.
But should you wish the walls laid down by your right hand
to keep a reputation worthy of yourself by a glorious end,
and the people not in exhaustion surrender to the African,
I will prolong the fame of their deaths, transmit it down
the centuries – the only boon that fate and the future allows
me grant – and follow myself their celebrated souls to hell."

The stern and maiden goddess then left the ether's airy heights
enraged, to seek Saguntum as it wrestled with its fate.
Invading minds she wanders through each familiar breast,
inspiriting them with her peculiar power; then, infused within
their marrow, inspired them, filled them with ferocious love
for her. And they want arms and to test their weakness in war.
Unhoped for strength returns as deeper within, resurgent, thrives
respect for their sweet deity, a desire for death in her defence.
Through their elated hearts there flows despite the weariness
a silent will to suffer worse than death and to try the food
of wild beasts, adding foul abomination to their board,
but the chaste goddess forbids an extension of life befouled
by such a crime, and quells the desire to feed on human flesh.

And Juno, making her way by chance to the Carthaginian camp,
espied the goddess Fides in the citadel of this people she loathed,
and rebuked the warmongering passions of the virgin deity.
Then stumbling with rage at once she summoned dark
Tisiphone[24], who herds and whips the souls in deepest hell,
and, outstretching her hands, said, "Daughter of Night,
throw down these city walls by main force, and overwhelm
these arrogant folk with your right hand! It is Juno's command,
and I'll observe your energy and work from this nearby cloud.
Those weapons that disturb the gods and even mighty Jupiter –
flames, hideous serpents and all the poisons that mix
and foam with gall, your cries that close the fearful jaws

[24] One of the Furies, or Erinyes whose task it was to punish criminals, especially as in Aeschylus' *Oresteia* the spillers of kindred blood. The others of the trio were Megaera and Allecto.

of Cerberus himself, whatever condign punishments
and rage are brewed within your fecund heart –
these gather now and hurl headlong against Saguntine men,
and despatch in its entirety their city down to Erebus!
Let this be the price agreed for Fides' fall through the sky."

As Juno spoke and spurred the savage Fury on, with her own
right hand she hurled Tisiphone against the city's walls.
The mountain shook, while bass waves pounded the shore.
On the Fury's head and round her swollen neck there hissed
a glittering brood of scale backed and sibilant snakes.
Death marched abroad and, gaping rictus wide, his throat
yawned high above the fated citizens: then Lament and Grief,
her breasts bruised black, and Pain and Sorrow attended him,
and all the Furies were there, and insomniac Cerberus bayed
in their train, the triple headed guardian of Hell's infernal gate.
At once the shape shifting monster took on Tiburna's form,
her gait also and at the same time her speaking voice.
This woman was grieving for her marriage bed – Murrus gone[25],
that bed was made empty by war and the savage blasts of Mars.
A noblewoman, she traced her line from Daunus'[26] blood.
The Fury, replicating Tiburna's looks with dishevelled hair
and cheeks her nails had torn in overwhelming grief,
rushed wildly into the crowd and cried, "What now at last?
Sufficient is our sacrifice to Loyalty and kin! With my own eyes
I have seen my Murrus bring terror with his corpse
and dreadful sounding words to my sleepless nights:
'Remove yourself at once, my wife, from the ruinous fate
of this wretched town, and if the Punic victory allows
no haven, flee, Tiburna, to my shade. Our family gods
have fallen. Saguntum is lost. The Punic sword is sovereign.'
My mind is horrified and still that vision plagues my eyes.
Shall nevermore I look upon your people's homes, Saguntum?
You were blessed, Murrus, to die while still your country lived!
We, though, shall herded be to serve Sidonian[27] wives, and will
become a spectacle for victorious Carthage after the fates of war
and perils of the mighty sea; and when at length death's dark falls
on me I shall sleep a captive slave in Libya's alien womb.
But you, young men whose conscious courage forbids
live capture, for whom death is a weapon of strength against
harsh fate, save your mothers from slavery now yourselves.
The path that showcases virtue is steep. Make haste to be
the first to seize unprecedented glory so hard to achieve."

With such exhortatory speech she stirred their troubled ears,
then sought the mound Amphitryon's son[28]had raised upon
the city's peak to serve as a landmark for the sailors at sea

[25] For Murrus' story see Bk. 1.376ff.
[26] Daunus was a mythical king of Apulia and father of Aeneas' enemy Turnus.
[27] That is 'Carthaginian'.
[28] Hercules.

and honoured Zacynthus' ashes there with welcome gifts[29].
Then – dreadful to see and roused from its lair in the depths -
there burst out a snake, blue-green and flecked with gold;
it's eyes glowed bloody and red and flashed with fire,
while with vibrating tongue its sibilant mouth made hiss…
it coiled its way through the trembling crowds and the town,
slid down from the towering city walls in great haste
and like a runaway made its way to the neighbouring shore,
then plunging headlong dove into the surf and sea-foam.

Then indeed was their sanity strained, as if the dead
had fled and abandoned their homes, and their ghosts
refused to lie in servile soil. Salvation seemed a vain
hope. Fasting in anguish, the Fury possessed them.
In troubled times the harshness of gods is bleak
like man's inability to stave off death. In despair men seek
to end their lives, weighed down by the light of day.
In eager haste a pyre stands, raised in the centre of town,
its mass a threat to the stars. They carry there and drag
the spoils of a lengthy peace and wealth achieved in war,
robes mothers have embroidered with Gallician gold,
arms brought by their ancestors from Zacynthus' isle
and household gods imported from old Ardea[30].
Whatever is left the besieged is thrown on the pyre –
their shields and also their unfortunate swords.
They excavate from deep in the earth hoards hid in time
of war and take delight and pride in their consignment
of their conqueror's spoils at last to the flames.

When the feral Fury sees this pile of goods amassed,
she brandishes a torch once dipped in the fires of Phlegethon[31]
and hid the gods above from sight with the mists of hell.
The people then unbowed began a task which fame
unfortunate maintained world wide in glory everlasting.
Tisiphone first, impatient of a father's halting hand,
triumphantly urged in the reluctant sword to the hilt[32]
and twice and thrice cracked loud her Stygian scourge.
Men stain unwilling hands in kindred blood, amazed
at the crimes they commit, and minds deranged,
they weep at sacrilege. One man, enraged and crazed
by disaster and a life that ends in extreme misery,
directs a sidelong glance at his mother's breasts[33].
Another snatches up an axe and aims it at the neck
of his dear wife, then chides himself and condemns
his tempered fury, throws it down, his limbs grown numb.

[29] See Bk. 1.276ff.
[30] Ardea was one of the ancestral homes of the Rutulians.
[31] A river of fire that ran through the underworld.
[32] Apparently a father is killing his child to prevent it falling into Carthaginian captivity.
[33] Intent on matricide the man is abashed at the sight of his mother's breasts. One thinks of the plight of Orestes in Aeschylus *Choephori*, 896ff.

And yet there's no escape for him. The Fury strikes again,
and breathes black passion from her sibilant mouth.
And so an end to nuptial bliss – the groom forgets
the joys of marriage bed, forgets his wedding night.
Another hurls into the flames, using all his strength,
a body corrupt, where the flames' topmost crests
roil black with dense smoke in the pitchy dark.

In the midst of the crowds unhappy, Tymbrenus, you rage,
familial devotion perverse, and seek to cheat the Carthaginian
of your father's death, mutilating the features that match
your own, desecrating a corpse that mirrors your own…
A pair of identical twins both fall in their prime,
each brother counterfeits the other, Lycormas and Eurymedon,
identical. A task their mother had to call their proper names,
quite unaware of which of her sweet sons was which.
The sword lodged in Eurymedon's throat absolves the man
of matricide, while the wretched mother laments, confused
by her suffering and by false appearances deceived,
she cries, "Whither your rage? Turn your steel rather on me,
Lycormas!" Lycormas, though, has pierced his throat himself
already, see! She cries aloud, "What madness this, Eurymedon?
And then, deceived by her twin sons' identical forms,
the mother summoned her dead boys by their wrong names,
until she drove the steel through her own quivering breast
and fell upon her sons, still unaware of which was which.

Who could check his tears recounting the city's dreadful fall,
the laudable atrocities, the penalties meted out to Loyalty,
the wretched fates of pious men. The Carthaginian camp,
a foe quite ignorant of sentiment could scarce restrain its tears.
A city long the home of Loyalty, whose walls were laid down
by a deity, is ruined now and neglected by unjust gods,
a prey to false Carthage's weaponry and its warriors'
foul crimes. The sword and flames are rampant now.
What place lacks fire is replete with crime. The pyre
emits a cloud of black smoke reaching the stars on high.
On the top of its lofty mount the citadel's in flames,
untouched before by war (here once the populace were wont
to view the Carthaginian camp, the shore and all Saguntum)
and temples blaze; the sea is lit with reflections of fire,
which quiver and dance on the trembling tide.

Behold in the midst of the mayhem and madness Tiburna,
her right hand armed with her husband's shining sword
and brandishing in her left a blazing torch, poor soul,
her hair in disarray and squalid, displays her naked breast
all bruised and savaged with blows, her shoulders bared,
she tramples the very corpses to reach her Murrus' tomb.
Just so when the hall of the infernal father thunders dire,
and monarchic rage drives out the troubled dead,

Alecto stands before the throne and Pluto's dreadful seat
to serve the Chthonian Jove and exact dread punishments.
Her husband's arms but now retrieved and much blood spilled
she, weeping, settles on the mound, then prays to the dead
to welcome her and sets the blazing torch against the pyre.
Then seizing death she declared, "O best of men, behold - I bring
you these arms myself to the dead," then welcomed the sword,
fell onto the pyre and open mouthed inhaled the flames.

The folk lay everywhere - unhappy dead - their bodies half
consumed by fire, in serried ranks and mingled piles.
Just so when driven by hunger the victorious lion attacks
the sheepfold, jaws famished, and mangles the helpless beasts
and roars with mouth agape, and torrents of gore are belched
from that vast throat, he hunkers down upon the black array
of victims half consumed, or, with rumbling purr he grinds
his teeth and stalks between the piles of tortured carcasses.
The sheep lay all around at random with their guardian hound,
their group of shepherds and the owner of both flock and stall,
their huts and homes are all demolished and destroyed.
The Carthaginians invade the citadel, deserted through catastrophe.
And then at last her duty done the Fury returns to the underworld,
her praises sung by Juno and swelling with pride herself
that in her triumph she brought so many dead to Tartarus.

But go, you stellar souls, earth's ornament, you nonpareils,
no future age will match your venerable host. Now make your way
to Elysium to decorate there the pristine thrones of the blessed,
while the man to whom an unjust victory did gift him fame
(Now listen, world, and rupture not the treaties made in peace
nor abandon good faith for power!) an exile he will wander
the earth in its entirety, excluded from his native shores,
and Carthage, terrified, shall witness his headlong retreat[34].
Asleep Saguntum's shades will often horrify his dreams.
He will wish he'd died by his own hand, but denied the steel
the quondam invincible will take his ruined corpse
made livid by poison to the sunless waves of Styx.

[34] Hannibal was finally defeated by Scipio at he battle of Zama, 202 BCE.

Punica: Book 3

Silius Italicus

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Book 3

Saguntum fell and Bostar is despatched to Italy to consult Jupiter Ammon (1-13). Hannibal journeys to Gades where he visits the temple of Hercules. He marvels at the Atlantic tides (14-60). He sends Himilce and his son back home to Carthage (61-157). The upcoming campaign inspires his dreams (158-213). A catalogue of his forces is given (214-405). He crosses the Pyrenees (406-441). He crosses the rivers Rhone and the Durance (442-476), when he is confronted by the Alps (447-499). He struggles to the mountain peaks where he pitches camp on the summit (500-556). Jupiter and Venus discuss the destiny of Rome (557-629). Hannibal makes camp in the country near Turin (630-646). Bostar brings back from Africa the oracle given by Jupiter Ammon (647-714).

After the men of Carthage broke their oath and the walls
of chaste Saguntum fell, because of father Jupiter's unjust will,
at once the conqueror made his way to the folk who lived
at the end of the world and to his kin in the town of Gades[1].
He sought advice from the prophets and their prescient hearts
at once, regarding imperial dreams, while Bostar was sent
to set sail to learn in advance what was as yet still to come.
From time long gone by trust has been kept in those shrines,
where hornèd Ammon sits on high to rival Delphi's mantic caves,
and from his grove of prophecy reveals the truth of what's to come
in future centuries, amongst the thirsty Garamantian men.
From Ammon Hannibal sought good omens for his enterprise
in advance, endeavouring to learn the vicissitudes of war.

His next places of prayer were the altars of Hercules Claviger,[2]
and these he weighed down with the booty he recently snatched
as victor from the smoke of Saguntum's smouldering citadel.
The story was, and worth belief, that the timber of which the shrine
was made could not decay and had only known the hands
of its first builders. And so they took delight in the thought
that Hercules dwelt there still to keep corruption at bay.
Then those who were permitted the privilege of entering
the inmost shrine forbad any woman's approach, taking care
to fend off too the bristled pig; their dress before the shrine
is uniform; their bodies are swathed in linen, their heads
made bright with bands that are woven from Pelusian flax[3].
Their custom is to burn incense on the altars, their robes
ungirt, and pick out their sacred garb with a broad stripe.
They go bare foot, their hair quite shorn, to celibate beds.
They keep the eternal flames alive upon their altar stones.
No likeness, though, nor familiar statues of the gods

[1] Gades (Cadiz) was colony founded from Tyre and the major Phoenician settlement beyond the Mediterranean.
[2] 'Club-bearer'.
[3] This flax was from Pelusium on the Nile delta.

imbue the place with awe and solemn trepidation.

On the doors the labours of Hercules: the Hydra lay there,
her severed snakes beside her, there the Nemaean lion's head
was carved with the strangled neck and its jaws agape.
Hell's guard dog terrified the shades with savage howls,
yes, Cerberus, dragged finally now from his eternal caves,
and raging at his chains - Megaera too the fetters feared.
Close by the Thracian horse and baneful Erymanthian boar,
the brazen hooves and tree surpassing rack of Artemis's stag.
And no easier conquest Libya's earth born son[4], who stood
on mother earth and the Centaurs, dimorphous in shape,
and Achelous' shape-changing bovine, unicorn form[5].
Among these figures Oeta[6] glowed with sacred fires,
and flames snatch up to the stars the mighty soul of Hercules.

Once Hannibal's eyes had had their fill of Hercules' exploits,
he saw at once a miracle[7]: the deeps of the surging sea en masse
of a sudden invaded the land with no encircling shores,
and the fields were made standing pools by the flood.
For where Nereus unrolls himself from cerulean caves,
making Neptune's waters surge in the lower depths,
the sea floods headlong inland, and Ocean's stream
unleashes hidden springs to occupy the shore with tides.
The waters then, as though bestirred by the savage trident's thrust,
engage to impose their swollen mass upon the shore.
And presently the breakers retreat, roll back the ebbing tide,
while the fleet is left high and dry by the sea's retreat,
and the crews, asleep at their oars await the return of the sea.
It is the Moon that stirs the realm of errant Cymothoe[8],
and works the sea, the Moon that drives her chariot across the sky
to carry the tides this way and that, and Tethys[9] follows her lead.

The general saw this fleetingly, for much was on his mind.
His first concern was to save from war his wife who shared
his marriage bed and the infant son that suckled at her breast.
A virgin bride she was and he but a youth when first they wed,
and she clung to him with a love imbued with memories,
while their son who was born before the gates of besieged
Saguntum had not yet seen twelve lunar months pass by.
When his decision was made to send them from the host,
the general spoke, “Of lofty Carthage, my son, you are the hope,
and a source of no less dread to Rome than I. I pray that you

[4] Antaeus is meant whose strength was restored whenever he touched his mother Earth.
[5] Achelous was a shape-changing river god who fought with Hercules for the hand of Deianira. The story is told in Sophocles' *Trachiniae.*
[6] Hercules, in dreadful pain from poison unwittingly administered by Deianira is cleansed and burned on a sacred pyre on the slopes of Mt Oeta: again see Sophocles' *Trachiniae* and Seneca's *Hercules Oetaeus.*
[7] As an inhabitant of the Mediterranean Hannibal had no experience of the rise and fall of tides.
[8] Cymothoe was one of the Nereids or sea nymphs.

[9] Tethys was Okeanos' wife and mother of the Nereids.

exceed your father's fame and found your fame on famous feats,
with which to best a grandsire's warlike deeds. Already Rome
is sick with dread and counts your years in terms of maternal tears.
Unless I am made mock by my prophetic heart, in you there grows
huge anguish for the world. I recognise my father's countenance,
I recognise his threatening eyes beneath a threatening brow.
Your cries are deep, and mark an incipient anger like mine own.
And if by chance some deity cuts short our mighty enterprise,
and by my sudden death aborts our new born strategies,
do you, my wife, work hard to preserve this pledge of war.
And when he has the gift of speech, rehearse my infancy:
let him lay his childish hands on Dido's altar stones,
and on his father's ashes swear eternal war on Rome.
Then when his maturer years grow ripe in puberty
let him leap forth to war to trample the treaty underfoot,
and victorious raise for me a cenotaph upon the Capitol.
And you whose future holds the happy glory of so great
a son, though honoured for your loyalty, depart these risks
of uncertain war and abandon war's hard drudgery.
Cliffs closed with snow and crags that reach the sky await,
as does the task that brought a sweat to Herculean brows,
to trigger Juno's shock, and the Alps, a harsher task than war.
But if fickle Fortune's promise fails my enterprise and she
is hostile to my plans, I would that you might live your life
until old age; your youthfulness is worthy of a longer span
of life, so that the tardy Fates may cut your thread after mine."

So Hannibal spoke and Imilce did answer him, of Cirrhan
Castalius'[10] line herself, a man who used his mother's name to call
his city Castulo, which still retains the name of Phoebus, a priest,
as she herself derives her pedigree from priestly origins:
when Bacchus was conquering the peoples of Spain,
and battering Calpe[11] with his thyrsus and Bacchant force,
one Milichus was born of a nymph, Myrice, to a lusty Satyr,
and this man ruled far and wide in his native dominion,
and raised aloft his hornèd head, the very image of his sire.
From such origins Imilce traced her noble home and lineage,
although her name itself had been corrupted in the native speech.
She spoke to Hannibal through a veil of slowly dropping tears,
"Have you forgot our lives and salvation depend on you alone?
Will you exclude me from your plans? What then of marriage
and our first love shared? Do they suggest your wife would fail
to climb with you the snowy peaks? Put your trust in feminine
strength! Married love is more than a match for any toil!
But if you judge me by my sex alone and are resolved
to abandon me, I'll not hinder fate, but acquiesce. God favour you,
I pray! Go, prosper, go with gods and prayers to favour you!
And in the rank and file of battle and conflagrations of war,

[10] Imilce, the wife of Hannibal, came from a Spanish town, namely Castulo. The name of the town is derived by Silius from the name of a man from Delphi called Castalius. Cirrha is the port of Delphi on the Corinthian Gulf.
[11] Gibraltar, one of the Pillars of Hercules.

have a care to cherish the thoughts of your wife and son.
Indeed I do not fear the Romans or their spears and fire as much
as I dread you yourself. You rush headlong upon their swords,
expose your life to their spears! No successful battlefield
can satisfy your virtuous pride. Your thirst for glory knows
no bounds, and you believe it quite inglorious for a warrior
to die in a peaceful bed. My limbs begin to shake, although
I dread no man who meets with you in battle, one on one.
However, father of battles[12], deliver us from evil, pity us,
and keep safe the life of Hannibal from Roman threats!"

By now they had gone out to stand upon the sea shore,
and the ship rowed forward, the sailors hanging from the mast
to slowly set her billowing sails for the following wind,
when Hannibal, eager to ease her fears and soothe a mind
that was tormented with anxiety, began to speak,
"Refrain from tears and ominous thoughts, most faithful wife.
In peace and war life's span is fixed for all mankind,
and one's date of birth ordains one's last; men's fiery soul
permits but few men's names to journey ever on the lips of men.
Shall I endure the yoke of Roman servitude, and Punic lands
in chains? My father's ghost rebukes me through the dark
of night. That altar and the horrid rites stand clear before
my eyes, while the shortness of my changeful hour forbids
that I delay the day. Or should I sit until only Carthage knows
my quality and all the rest of humankind is ignorant of what
I am? Through fear of death shall I abandon glory's heights?
How little different from death is life that's full of quietude!
Yet have no fear that I have an incautious lust for praise.
I too put a price on life, and acclaim in old age brings delight,
when a hero is praised for once great deeds at his end of days.
And great rewards await you too from this incipient war;
if so the gods decide, all the Tiber and the women of Rome
and the descendants of Troy, rich in gold, will be your slaves."
And while they spoke and mingled both their tears,
the master, entrusting his ship to the sea, from his high seat
in the stern did summon her delay. And torn from his arms
her eager eyes strained after him and watched the shore,
until, as the swift ship sped on its watery course, the sea
stole sight away, and the land receded far behind them.

Then Hannibal prepares to distract his mind from love
with the cares of war and with hasty tread returns to the walls.
And while he makes his rounds of them observing all things
intently, at last his robust strength deserts his careworn toil,
and he takes the chance to soothe his warlike mind in sleep.

The almighty father then intent on testing the Roman race
with perils and through savage fame in war exalt them

[12] Mars.

to the stars, renewing too their former tribulations,
precipitated Hannibal's plans, bringing dread to his repose
and, sending awful dreams, disturbs his night of sleep.
And now Cyllene's god[13] delivered his father's commands,
and winged his way down through the dewy shades of night.
At once he came near the young man, as he eased his limbs
in peaceful sleep, assailing him with harsh admonishments,
"Disgraceful it is for a leader to squander whole nights in sleep,
you Lord of Libya! Success in war depends on wakeful generals!
Soon now you will see a fleet set forth to turn the sea to foam,
and Rome's warrior youth making haste across the ocean deep,
while you waste slow and idle time within the bounds of Spain.
Sufficient a feat, I suppose, and virtue worthy of memorial
to strain so hard to topple Saguntum's Greekling town?
So, come, then, if there is in you the heart to match a bold design,
make lively speed with me and join me as I summon you.
Do not look back! The father of the gods advises you in this!
And I will set you up victorious before the walls of lofty Rome."

He dreamt that Mercury then stretched out an arm to him,
and led him joyful and swift of foot to Saturn's land of Italy,
when all at once, all round about a cry resounding through
the breezes and a hiss as from a savage tongue affrighted him,
and in that moment of panic the dictates of the god escaped
the fearful warrior, who in his great dismay looked back…
And see! A serpent black of hue dragged from the hills
whole forests of oak, embraced in monstrous coils, and rocks
across the trackless wastes with deadly sibilant blast.
As big as the snake that encloses in its coils the Great
and Little Bears and folds these constellations in its course,
so great it is, as with its monstrous maw it parts its jaws
and lifts its head to match in height the cloudy peaks.
In sympathy the sound and fury of the ruptured sky
twists hail, cloudburst and storming rains together.
Appalled by the monster (for there was no genuine sleep
nor depth of night, since the god had put the shades
to flight with his wand, mixed night with day) the young
man asked the nature of this dreadful beast and where it takes
those limbs that crush the earth, what folk its maw demands.
Then Mercury, born in the cool, nurturing caves of Cyllene spoke,
"You see the war which you desired. In your train
will come world war, the fall of forests, storms that rage
in angry skies, mass slaughter of men, the mighty fall
of Ida's race[14], and its ill fated tragedy of tears.
As massive as the snake whose squamous hide did twist
the forests torn from ravaged hills throughout the plains,
and far and wide bedewed the earth with toxic foam,
so you descending monstrous from the conquered Alps

[13] Mercury is meant, who was born on Mt Cyllene in Arcadia.
[14] Mt Ida is to be found near Troy: accordingly 'Ida's race' is the people of Rome who trace their ancestry to Aeneas of Troy.

will enclose Italy in gloomy war and with pandemonium
raze cities to the ground, their walls thrown down."

Both god and slumber left him sickened by these stimuli.
Cold sweat slid down his limbs. With fearful joy he mused
upon on the dream borne promises, rehearsed the night.
Soon Jupiter and Mars were honoured for omens kind,
while mentor Mercury's deserving altars were made glad
with holy sacrifice of a snow white cattle beast, a bull.
At once the general gave orders for the standards to be plucked
from the earth and a sudden polyglot clamour shook the camp.
Calliope, immortalize the peoples summoned by these dire
events and launched against the Latin realms of Italy!
Name cities unconquered in Spain which Carthage armed,
and the squadrons mustered from the shores of Africa,
when she dared demand for herself the reins of empire,
and change the world's imperial yoke! For never before
had tempests struck more savagely, forced on by cruel squalls,
nor did the dreadful war that wrecked a thousand ships
so rage and seethe before to terrify a fearful world.

The youth of Tyrian Carthage raised the standards first,
light limbed, denied the pride derived from stature tall,
yet quick to learn the art of deceit and never slow
to devise a secret trap. A crude shield armed them then,
while they fought with a short sword, barefoot, no belt
to hold their tunic in place, but skilled at hiding blood
in battle spilled in the folds of their scarlet cloaks.
Their general was Mago, Hannibal's brother, who shone
and gleamed in purple robes above all their heads, as he drove
his chariot - joy in its clatter - aspiring sibling, rival in arms.

Next after Carthage Utica's men streamed out, a place
so old its birth predates the citadels of ancient Byrsa.
Then Aspis whose walls enclose land girt by sea,
a crescent of turreted towers built by the tyrant Agathocles[15].
Their general, Sychaeus, attracted to himself the people's gaze,
Hasdrubal's son. His mother's line had made his heart
vainglorious and Hannibal's name was ever on the nephew's lips.

Berenicis' warlike progeny was there from by the sea,
nor were Barce's soldiers absent, its springs drought parched,
whose hands are armed for battle with the well honed pike.
Cyrene too roused Battus' Peloponnesian sons to wage,
war, treacherous men and not to be trusted at all.
Ilertes was their leader whom ancient Hamilcar praised
long ago, his counsel still green, but his age inactive in war.

Then Sabratha and Phoenician Leptis sent their Tyrian horde,

[15] Agathocles of Syracuse fortified Aspis (meaning shield) in 310 B.C. when at war Carthage.

and Oea dispatched Sicilian colonists mixed with Africans,
while Lixus sent the men of Tripoli from the stormy sea.
Then Vaga and Hippo, well loved by the ancient kings,
and Ruspina, safely built well back from the salt sea's flood,
and Zama too and Thapsus, well nourished now by Roman gore.
Antaeus leads this multitude, a giant with a giant's armoury,
whose name and deeds preserved the fame of Hercules,
whose image tall he raised above the serried rank and file.

Abyssinians came, a race well known to the Nile, who mine
the lodestone. Theirs alone the privilege of moving steel
held close to the stone, but with no contact made.
Along with them the Nubians arrived, their colour, burned
black, proof of the of the sun's dire heat. No brazen helms
for them, nor rigid breastplates of steel - they bend no bows.
Their custom to protect their heads with many linen layers,
their bodies too, while hurling javelins, envenomed at the tips,
to shame the steel's fair fame with toxic juices stained.
The Macae then from the Cinyps stream first learned
to pitch their camp Phoenician style. They sport rough beards
and cover their backs and shoulders with wiry goatskin hide.
Their weapon of choice is a spear that is curved in the blade.
By contrast the sword of the Adyrmachidae has a subtle curve,
their shields are multicoloured. Greaves protect their left leg.
Uncivilized men, their diet harsh and victuals crude -
for their grim meals are cooked on the burning sand.
The Massyli brought their shining standards too,
remotest men they come from Hesperides' groves.
Their leader was Bocchus the Bad, and from his head
the twisted dreadlocks hung, who had seen the sacred trees
beside the shore and the golden fruit among the leaves of green.

Your hamlets abandoned you men of Gaetulia come
to Hannibal's camp, long used to mix with feral beasts,
to speak with and soothe with words the lions' rage.
No fixed abode, they live on carts, nomadic in their ways
across the plains, transporting their wandering gods.
Wing footed troops of horse a thousand strong, more swift
than the wind, and steered with a crop invade the camp,
just as when the nimble Spartan hound fills all the bush
with errant bark, or keen scented Umbrian huntaways
drive beasts headlong from the cattle track, and herds
of panicking and fleeting deer dash far and wide.
Their leader, grim and troubled his face, was Acherras,
still grieving for his sister, Asbytes, so recently slain[16].

The Marmaridae, a magical race, arrived with clattering din,
at whose incantations the snake forgets its toxic bite,
at whose soothing touch its bristling crest subsides.

[16] See Bk. 2. 56ff.

The hardy youth of Baniura next, a race with little steel,
content to toughen the tips of their spears with meagre flames,
and bellicose mixed war cries savagely with angry speech.
The Autololes too, a fiery race and swift of nimble foot;
so great their speed no horse nor swollen river's spate
could match them; they vie with birds and when at pace
they rush across the plain you seek their spoor in vain.
The Lotus Eaters too were seen in the camp, their food
the sweet sap drained from the tree and its forgetful fruit.
Garamantes as well were there that dread the rabid snakes
their desert vastness breeds, their venom foaming black.
When Perseus stole the Gorgon's head, the story goes,
vile blood bespattered Libya's land with Medusa's snakes.
The respected leader of these thousands of men was Choaspes,
a man from Menninx, an Ithacan isle, whose javelin armed
his lightning fast right hand, a spear of great renown.
The maritime Nasamones came, a race that dared to board
shipwrecks at sea and plunder booty from the deep;
also the men who dwell beside the stagnant pools of lake
Tritonis, where the warlike maiden Pallas from the waters leapt,
according to the tale, anointing Libya first with her own olive oil.

Present too the totality of tribes of Spain's remotest west:
Cantabrians first, to heat or cold or famine quite immune,
in each and every task they carry off the palm of victory.
When sluggish age grows grey this race takes strange delight –
anticipating years of slothful quietude by sudden death,
incapable of life sans war! Indeed their lives are meaningless
without it, while they condemn a life that is lived in peace.

There also came, bedewed with Aurora's tears,
fled far from eastern native shores to a world
in the west, Memnon's unlucky squire, Astyr[17].
The Asturian horse is small and not well fitted for war;
yet its gait is smooth which makes for a comfortable ride,
while in peace its docile neck may speed a landau's course.
Their leader Cydnus, keen to traverse the Pyrrhenian tops
in the hunt or skirmish from afar with Moorish spear.

Celts also came who had linked their name with the Hiberi[18].
Their ambition death in battle – anathema to have their corpse
cremated, believing that their soul ascends to the gods on high,
if some famished vulture feasts upon their scattered limbs.

Men skilled in reading entrails, the flight of birds
and the thunder's flash were sent by rich Gallicia,
delighting they in now chanting in their native tongue
crude songs, now pounding the earth with alternate feet,

[17] The name of the Astures is derived by Silius from that of Astyr, Memnon's charioteer. The tears are those of Aurora shed when Achilles killed her son at Troy.
[18] Hence the 'Celtiberi'.

in clashing in time to the music resonant shields.
These men take sacred joy in such leisure and sport.
The women do the other work. To scatter the seed
in the furrow and to turn the earth with the plough,
the men deem women's work. The Gallician's wife
is sedulous in taking on all necessary peacetime tasks.
These Viriathus led and the Lusitanians drawn forth
from forests far away, yes, Viriathus in the bloom of youth,
a name made famous later by Rome's catastrophes[19].
The Cerretani, Hercules' troops took up arms with no
delay, as did the Vascones unused to wearing helmets.
Ilerda too that later witnessed Rome's crazed civil wars[20],
while you, Concanian, prove your Massagetan ancestry,
by sating yourself on blood bled from your horse's neck.
Phoenician Ebusus awakes to arms, Arbacians too,
who fight the fight with the dart or slender javelin.
The men of the Balearics came, waging war with sling
and swift shot, sprung from Lindus and Tlepolemus'[21]line.
The men of Oene and Aetolian Tyde sent the tribe
called Gravii, their name a corruption of Graii.
New Carthage, Teucer's foundation of old, sent its men,
also Massilia's colony Emporiae and Tarraco, rich
in vines, sent their youth, its wine second only to Latium's.
In their midst the Sedetanian troops outshone the rest
with their gleaming breast-plates, despatched by Sucro's
icy waters and their high towered home town, Saetebis -
Saetebis, that in arrogant despite of Arabian looms
compares her cloth to the best of Pelusian[22]work.
Mandonius ruled these folk, and Caeso, horse whisperer
supreme, on whose shared labour their army depends.

Balarus inspected the Vettonian horse upon the savannah,
and when the spring blows gentle and warm in that land,
the herd of mares is stilled and mates in silent union,
impregnated in secret desire by the wind's potent breath[23].
The breed, though, is not long-lived and age advances apace;
seven years is the longest of spans these horses achieve.

Uxama's horses do not though skip on such light feet beneath
Sarmatian walls. Her cavalry came to war tenacious of life, a rude
strength theirs, intolerant of reins and their riders' demands.
Rhyndacus led them, armed with short spears; their helms
inspire dread, beast jaws agape; they live for the hunt, or like
their fathers before support themselves by rape and violence.

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[19] See Duff's note *ad loc.* 'The allusion is to a later Viriathus, who for fourteen years fought a guerrilla war against Rome for the freedom of his country, and fell by treachery in 142 B.C.'
[20] In 49 BC Ilerda was the scene of fighting between Caesar and Pompey in the Civil Wars.
[21] Lindus was founded in Rhodes by Tlepolmus, son of Hercules.
[22] Egyptian: Pelusium is a city on the Nile delta.
[23] This mode of fertilization accounts for the speed of their progeny, cf. Vergil, *Georgics* 3. 271.

The flags of Parnasian Castulo outdid in brightness all the rest,
Seville's also, made famous by trade and the height of its tides,
and Nebrissa's, the Nysaean god's friend of the thyrsus wand,
Nebrissa, home of skipping Satyrs and Maenads at night,
who dress for their rites in fawn-skins and vine leaves divine.
Carteia sent to war and arms the children of Argonthonius,
their ancestors' king who lived a veritable wealth of years,
a warrior king who measured off three centuries of war.
Tartessos armed itself, which land farewells the setting sun,
and Munda[24], destined to duplicate the deaths of Pharsalus.
Nor did Cordoba delay, a land rich in pride and gold.
They followed the lead of Phorcys, him of the flaxen hair,
of Arauricus too, a warrior to waste the fields of wheat,
coevals, born on the fertile banks of Baetis' stream,
whose course is shaded by Minerva's olive boughs.

Suchlike the armoured host that Hannibal did urge and sweep
at speed across the plains, made dark with its dust as far
as a man could see, and, as he rode, he rejoiced in the sight
of their glittering standards that cast a giant shadow on the land.
Just so, when Neptune sweeps his chariot across the deeps
and seeks the bounds of Ocean behind his team of horse,
the troop entire of Nereids swims from its caves in competition,
to ply their fair white arms as they cleave the crystal seas.

But Hannibal now sought the summit of the leafy Pyrenees –
the world that had been at peace confused, disturbed.
The range commands from its lofty wind swept peaks
a prospect far and wide of the chain that parts both Spain
and Gaul, and keeps these mighty nations ever separate.
The mountains take their name from Bebryx's girl, a maid,
and once a victim of Hercules, who in his labours chanced
to quest through the vastness of tri-form Geryon's land.
The hero, flown with wine in Bebryx's savage court,
despoiled Pyrene of her maidenhead, abandoned
her to blame her beauty - the god the cause of the poor
girl's death, if one should credit that… a god the cause
of death. Her womb produced a snake and, in fear
of her father's rage, she fled at once in distress
from the home she held so dear. In lonely caves
she bemoaned her night with Hercules, proclaimed
the hero's promises to the darkling woods, until,
as she mourned for that ravished love betrayed,
outstretched her arms, appealing for her hero's help,
wild beasts did rend her. Hercules came back victorious[25],
then drenched her wounded limbs with tears, grew pale,
distraught - discovering the head of the girl he loved.
The mountain peaks and ridges then rang to his cries,
reverberate; with great cries of grief he called her name,

[24] Munda was the site of the battle in Spain where Julius Caesar defeated Pompey's sons in 45 BCE.
[25] Geryon had been killed by Hercules.

Pyrene, and all the boulders there and wild beast haunts
did resonate. And then he laid her body in its grave,
and shed a final tear; her fame will never fade with time -
the mountains will forever bear her lamentable name.

And Hannibal had by now crossed through the thickly pine
clad hills to pass the frontiers of Bebryx's royal realm.
From there his fearsome trek sought out the hostile lands
of the Volcae - these he plundered, then marched in haste
to the threatening banks and turbulent flow of the Rhone.
From its source in the Alpine steeps and snowy crags
the Rhone flows into Gaul to trace its mighty flood,
dividing the plains with foaming stream in its rush
headlong to its gaping mouth and outlet to the sea.
The Saône combines to swell the Rhone, despite its smooth,
calm, soundless flow, while Rhone embraces Saône in its roar
and flood and sweeps it all reluctant through fields
to the sea, forbids it to name its neighbouring banks.
The soldiers plunge into the stream too wild to bridge;
some men protect their weapons, arms and heads held high,
still others strive by main force to ward off the flood.
The horses, haltered, cross in barges made of alder wood,
while nervous elephants did not delay the traverse -
the stream was covered with connected rafts, themselves
disguised with earth, launched out and onto the deep,
their chains let out by degrees from the bank's rampart
The Rhone, afraid of this incursion from a herd of dark
and trumpeting beasts, turned torrent back his torrent
and rumbled grumbling threats from beneath his sandy bed.

The army crossed now the borders of the Tricastini to make
swift progress through easy terrain and the land of the Vocontii,
but next the Durance, thick with rocks and tree trunks blocked
the general's fortunate route. With its source in the Alps
it tumbles in its din uprooted ash trees and hunks of rock
eroded from the peaks. The rushing waters bay like hounds.
With every changes of course the crossing grows
more treacherous for travellers on foot, a risk as well
for wide beamed boats; now flush with recent rains
it whirls in its eddying whorls a host of warriors,
dead, snatched away, all drowned and mutilated made.

But further memories of toils now past were snatched
away, as terrified they witnessed close at hand the Alps.
Perpetual snows and hail hold fast the land in its entirety,
imprisoning the ice of ages past. The mountain faces stand
erect to reach the sky and though they face the rising sun
they know not how to melt the packed sun smitten snow.
As deep as the gulf that gapes to separate the pallid realm
of Tartarus from the world above, descending to the dead
and Hades' marsh, so high do here the peaks rise through

the skies above to steal the sunlight and shade the earth.
No spring comes here nor yet any of the summer's rewards.
Drab winter alone inhabits these dismal fastnesses to guard
her eternal home, the where she drives from every source
black storm clouds mixed with rain and hail and sleet.
Already wind and all the tempest blasts had founded here
their raging Alpine realm. Mist hangs before the eyes
upon the tops and mountain peaks march into cloud.
Mt Athos twinned with Taurus, Rhodope with Mimas' mount,
and Pelion on Ossa piled, and Othrys on Mt Haemus – no match!
First Hercules set foot upon these virgin fastnesses. The gods
observed him cleave the clouds to master precipitous steeps,
and with his almighty strength subdue the rocks and crags
that had remained inviolate since the time of their birth.

The army marched now with laggard and hesitant step,
like men who, spiting Nature's prohibition, bring impious arms
to sacrosanct lands, in blatant defiance of the wishes of gods.
Their leader though by contrast had no fear of Alpine threats,
nor yet any terror of the place, but roused his soldiers' hearts
that were cast down, renewed their spirits with his speech,
"Are you not ashamed to have grown weary of successes won
by favour divine, and, after the glory of war and the battle line
to retreat from snowy peaks, and – cowards! - yield to crags?
Now, now, my friends, think that you scale the tyrannical walls
of Rome, and mount the steeps of Rome's Capitoline Hill.
Our toils ensure we will enchain both Italy and Tiber's flood!"
With no delay he marched his troops uphill, the men inspired
by promises of wealth, and he ordered them to leave behind
the route of mighty Hercules and rather strike out on ground
unknown and, as pathfinders, carve out a route of their own.
He was first to master the beetling steeps, and conquer the crags,
while from his lofty vantage point he urged his warriors on.
Then, where they were frustrated and delayed in their climb
by the ice that formed a solid and slippery path to the peak,
he cut steps with his sword in the ice. The melting snow
engulfed his men in its maw and buried whole companies
of troops alive in the precipitous rush and roar of avalanche.
The contrary blast of the blustery North-west wind, on wings
of darkness, drove blizzards of curdled snow in their face;
or again the howling storm snatched from men, despoiled
by its tempestuous blast, their weapons, flung high to the sky.
The higher the progress made, as they struggled to climb
the mountain's face, the harder their toil. Peak followed peak
before their weary eyes, as each massif engendered one more
in its turn, whence they took no retrospective delight in what
their sweating toil had tamed; the seamless aspect of the snow's
unending surface terrified their gaze, while a single face
of frozen and compacted snow confronted them, wherever they
could turn in turn their gaze. Just so the mariner at sea,
when he has left the joys of land behind and his empty sails

flap idly on the mast, becalmed, then his affrighted gaze
observes the vast expanse of ocean and, overcome by the sight
of endless deeps, he turns his weary eyes in relief to the skies.

And now, to cap the disasters and dangers of the terrain,
half wild barbarians peered out from the rocks, their hair
made stiff with filth and a lifetime's grime, to launch attacks.
These nimble Alpine tribes emerged from hollow caves
through thickets of familiar thorn and snow and trackless wastes
to cut off and harass the men of Carthage with mountain assaults.
The place was now transformed: for here the snow was stained
and fouled with gouts of blood, while here, the ice so loath
to yield, grew warm with gore and little by little gave way.
And when the horse imprints his horny hoof to pierce the ice,
that hoof itself sticks hard and fast in the hoary hollow made.
Nor is there only the risk of a fall. Men leave limbs sheared
by frostbite, cruel cold excises limbs that were broken before.
Twelve days and as many savage nights they measured out
in such distress, before they collapsed on that longed for peak
and suspended their precarious camp upon the beetling cliffs.

But Venus now quite shaken by a mixture of doubt and dread
addressed her sire in a wretched spate of tumbling complaint,
"What limit is set, what end in sight for the tribulation and toils
of Rome? And when allow the men of Rome to find a home,
their journey done by land and sea? And why does Hannibal
attempt to drive my children from the city gifted by you?
The Carthaginian has planted Africa upon the Alps, portends
an end to empire. The men of Rome fear now Saguntum's fate.
Where shall we carry at last the ashes and sacred ruin of Troy,
Assaracus'[26] household god and the secrets rites of Vesta – grant
us, father, a home and haven of salvation in our overthrow.
We seek a place of exile across the globe – enough is enough!
Or will Rome be took and the lofty citadels of Ilium fall again?"

These Venus' words: and in response her father spoke,
"Fear not, Cytherea[27]. Nor let the warlike plans of Tyre
disturb your heart; your bloodline holds and will long-time hold
the Tarpeian rock, but I am of a mind to watch their warriors
in this great conflict, and test their metal in the toils of war.
A race once enduring in war that delighted in hardships tamed
has little by little abandoned its ancestors' code of honour.
Upon a time the Roman never spared his blood in quest of praise,
ever thirsting for fame, but now he leads a life inglorious
and otiose , and whiles away a muted age without renown,
although my blood flows in their veins, while virtue grows
old, slowly poisoned, seduced and overcome by idleness.
A task of vast proportions and achieved by efforts huge it is

[26] Assaracus, son of Tros, was an early king of Troy.
[27] Cytherea was one of the names that Venus went by derived from the town of Cythera in Crete with which she had connections.

to claim sole sovereign rule among multifarious powers.
And there will come a time, you will see, when Rome's adversity
will win a noble empire. Hard work henceforth will fashion men
of a stamp to dwell on high with me; a Paulus[28] there will be,
and Fabius[29], Marcellus[30] too, my favourite of the worthy spoils.
The wounds these men endure will birth an empire for Latium
so great not even their descendents can ruin and fail, for all
their luxury and mores moulded by vice. Already that man
lives, fated to send the Carthaginian back home from Latium,
to strip lord Hannibal of his weaponry before his city walls.
And then, Cytherea, your folk will rule the world for an age.
In time a godlike exemplar of excellence from Cures will raise
himself to the stars[31], and a warlike race, one nourished by
the Sabine olive, will enlarge the name of the Julian clan.
Their patriarch will grant them victory over mythical Thule[32],
unknown before, and first invade the woods of Caledonia.
He will curb the Rhine with dykes, rule Africa with energy,
and in late maturity conquer Judaea's rich groves of palm.
No Stygian lake nor realm deprived of light shall be his home.
He will win a seat among the gods, win honours we enjoy.
His son, a young man, a non pareil in mental strength
will inherit his father's massive task, winning lofty rank
to raise his head to match his power. While still a youth
he will destroy the savage warrior force of Palestine[33].
But you, Germanicus[34], will transcend the deeds of kin,
a source of awe to blonde Batavians while still a boy.
Nor will the Tarpeian shrine in flames affright you[35],
but you will yourself be rescued from that impious fire;
you will share universal dominion with me long time.
The people of the Ganges will offer him their unstrung bows,
the Parthians too display their quivers absent of shafts.
Victorious in the North he will drive his triumphal chariot
through Rome, conquer too the East, while Bacchus yields.
When the Danube is loath to let pass the legions of Rome,
victorious he will keep its stream within Sarmatian terrain.
He will outdo the sons of Romulus in his powers of speech,
and all those who won a name for eloquence. The Muses too
will bring him gifts - his lyre amazes lord Apollo, a better sound
than his which stopped the Hebrus' flow and summoned Rhodope.
As well he will build a temple of gold on the site where – see! –
there stood before my ancient home upon Tarpeia's rock, and he

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[28] L. Aemilius Paulus was killed at the Roman defeat at Cannae in 216 BCE.
[29] Fabius was the dictator who earned the nickname *Cunctator* by reason of the delaying tactics he deployed against Hannibal in a war of attrition.
[30] In 215 BCE M. Claudius Marcellus killed Viridomarus, king of the Insubrians with his own hands in battle and so earned the *spolia opima.* He also defeated Hannibal at Nola in 215 BCE.
[31] The emperor Vespasian is meant.
[32] Thule is a name indicating the far north, possibly the Shetland Islands or Iceland, according to Duff, *ad loc.*
[33] In 70 CE Titus captured Jerusalem to end the Jewish war.
[34] Domitian granted himself this title.
[35] In 69 CE the temple on the Capitol was destroyed by fire and Domitian was almost killed in the conflagration.

will raise its height to join its roof with our home in the sky[36].
So, son of a god and father of gods to come, now guide a world
that is blessed by your paternal rule! At the very last the skies
will welcome your old age and Quirinus relinquish his throne,
while brother and father will seat you there between them:
the head of your son divine close by will radiate a light divine."

While Jupiter outlined the course of history yet to come,
the Carthaginian leader, descended the treacherous heights,
attempted with faltering foot to secure a treacherous path
through trackless wastes, as he traversed the saturated rocks.
No hostile battle line detained him, but the precipitous steeps
were a fearful threat along with the bluffs and outcrops of rock.
Men stop, hemmed in, lamenting delay and the dangerous route.
And nor were they allowed to sleep, refresh their frozen limbs:
they work through the night, required to make haste,
to shoulder logs and strip from the hills the mountain ash.
Then they clear felled the dense and thickly wooded hills,
made bonfires and the rock, consumed by greedy flames
was constrained to melted and so its mass, assailed by steel
and weakened, groaned aloud, its weight gave way, collapsed
to reveal to the weary troops Latinus' ancient realm below.
With misadventures such as these Hannibal crossed the Alps,
untrod before, and made camp on the plains of the Taurini[37].

Meanwhile Bostar arrived and brought with him the oracles
of Jupiter. He had crossed with joyous relief the Saharan sands
and urged Hannibal on, as if he had seen himself the Thunderer,
"Great scion of Belus' line, whose strong right arm wards slavery
from your native walls, we penetrated through to Libya's shrine.
The Syrtis brought us close to the gods as its surf licked the stars,
while the land more deadly still than the deep near swallowed us.
The deserted plains stretch out to reach the far horizons there
on every side, and in all that vastness of space Nature forbids
a single rise, unless a twisting storm of hollow cloud constructs
a dune from gathered, compacted and windblown sand. Or if
the South west wind escapes to devastate the earth, and a blast
from the Nor'wester scatters sea across the sky, invades the plain,
an arena large enough to stage their strife, and together they
in concert raise mountainous dunes of aggregated sand.
Observing the stars we steered our way through the valleys
between, since daylight confuses the route, and Cynosura[38],
the truest guide of Tyrian sailors, guides the travellers adrift
in these endless sandy wastes that stretch before the eyes,
but when we came exhausted to the groves and wooded realm
of Hornèd Jupiter[39] and his glittering temples there, then Arisbas
took us in as guests and welcomed us to his house and home.

[36] Domitian's golden temple of Jupiter was completed on the Capitol in 82 CE.
[37] Hence the name of the modern city Turin.
[38] The Little Bear was used by the Phoenicians as a navigational aid.
[39] Jupiter Ammon.

There stands near the shrine a novel and wonderful spring,
that flows warm at both the dawning and the close of day,
but when the midday sun stands high in the sky runs cold,
returning again to run hot, as soon as evening shadows fall.
The old man then shows off the numinous places and the fields
that are rich yet unploughed and spoke from a joyous heart,

"Grace these shady groves and temple, sky high, with prayer,
Bostar, and these woods that once knew the tread of Jove.
For who in all the world is unaware of lord Jupiter's gifts,
twin doves that settled on Thebe's lap in Greece[40]?
Of these one flew to the land of Epirus' forest oracle[41],
and fills Dodona's oaks with a mantic murmuring song.
The other cleaving the sky above the Carpathian sea[42],
did fly on sable wings to meet the sable folk of Libya,
and Venus' bird established here this temple's site,
where now you see the altar and these shady groves,
and picking out the leader of the flock did perch,
mirabile dictu, between the horns of his fleecy head
and sang his answers to the peoples of Marmarica[43].
And of a sudden then a grove of ancient oaks, full grown,
sprang from the ground to reach upon their natal day
the star lit sky they reach today; and so the grove inspired
an ancient awe, its altars ever warmed with steaming blood."

And as we wondered at his words the doors crashed wide,
unlocked and thunderous, and a brighter light at once
assailed our eyes. A priest stood there before the shrine, enrobed
in dazzling white, and all the people strove to gather there.
And after I had unburdened myself of the message trusted me,
behold, a sudden deity inspired the priest! The clashing trees
were witness to a deep and sonorous murmuration in the grove,
and a louder voice than we had known before burst on the air,
"Your aim is Latium, you men of Libya, and you prepare to rouse
in war Assaracus'[44] line. I see your enterprise is perilous indeed,
and brutal Mars ascends his car, his horses, crazed, breath fire
on Italy - I also see their reins are drenched in floods of blood.
And you that ask the outcome of this fatal, fateful and fated war,
make savage sail at once upon this great and glorious enterprise,
advance against the Iapygian plains of Aetolian Diomede[45],
and you will enhance the name of your Phoenician line,
and none will surpass the depth of your thrust into the heart
and soul Italy's land, so long as the vanquished warriors

[40] Duff (Note *ad loc.*)suggests that Silius differs from Herodotus who located the myth in Egypt.
[41]The literal translation of Silius' line is, 'Of which one on wings touched down at Chaonia', a district of Epirus.
[42] The Aegean.
[43] Duff, *ad loc*, 'A district of North Africa: the inhabitants are called Marmaridae.'
[44] The men of Rome – see Bk. 1. 566.
[45] Upon returning from Troy Diomede founded Argyripa in Apulia on the Iapygian plains, where was fought the battle of Cannae in which Hannibal inflicted a huge defeat upon the Roman army in 216 BCE.

of Rome shall quake in dread before you! Since Saturn's race 710
will never lay aside their fear and dread of Carthaginians,
while Hannibal draws breath within this upper world.'"

Such were the prophecies Bostar brought back, bringing joy
to fill the Carthaginian troops with a passion for sudden war.

Punica: Book 4

Silius Italicus

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Book 4

Rome is troubled by rumours of Hannibal's advance to Italy. The senate, though, remains staunch (1-38). Hannibal tries to recruit the Gauls in Northern Italy, while Scipio returns in haste from Marseilles (39-55). Both generals inspire their troops for battle (56-100). An omen is observed before the battle (101-134). The battle of the Ticinus (135-479). Scipio withdraws as far as the Trebia and is joined by Ti. Sempronius Longus with fresh troops (480-497). Hannibal provokes a battle (498-524). The battle of the Trebia (525-704). The consul C. Flaminius Leads a fresh force north into Etruria (705-721). Juno provokes Hannibal to cross the Apennines and make camp at Lake Trasimene (722-762). Carthaginian envoys ask whether Hannibal will sanction the sacrifice of his son and are refused (763-829).

The troubled cities of Italy host Rumour's tale both far and wide
that the lofty Alps and crags that menace the sky have succumbed
to the yoke, that the Carthaginians have crossed the trackless wastes
and Hannibal has come down from the Alps, can boast of deeds
to match the tasks of Hercules. Foul Rumour sings of dread events
and swells in her passage, more swift than Eurus' wingèd wind[1]
to shake with terrifying tales the panic-stricken cities of the plain.
Anxiety enlarged on what it heard is ever eager to foster careless talk
amongst the populace with false reports. At once there is a rush
to the fretful cares of war and of a sudden Mars cries aloud
throughout the length of Italy to summon warriors to arms.
Men refurbish javelins and scour away the rust, and take
their helmets out of store to fix fresh snowy plumes upon
their crests, while spears are retrofitted with the casting thong -
axe heads are freshly tempered in the blacksmith's forge.
The breastplate is assembled, secure protection for the chest
and sides, to fend away so many dextrous and yet ineffective blows.
Some mend their bow in the night, some break the panting horse
with blows and circling reins, and hone their sword upon the stone.
And men make haste to mend their broken city walls that show
the wear and tear of time; they transport vast heaps of stone,
rebuild towers eroded by far too long a stretch of idleness.
The citadels are stocked with arms, men carry stout logs
from the woods to bolster the gates with trusty cross bars,
and encircling moats are dug. For panic is an energising force
on every front, and panic is rife in the desolate countryside.
Men abandon their homes; bewildered sons transport
sick mothers on their shoulders and drag old men along,
the elders, whose span of life is near its end; the wife
is driven in front, her hair in disarray, while kiddies cling
to their father's hands, their childish steps irregular.
And so the populace at large transmits unsubstantiated fears,
but the senate, despite their private horror of the war and Hannibal's
great enterprise, and disappointed by the trackless Alpine wastes,

[1] Eurus is the South East wind.

maintain a mood of hardihood in danger's face and raise
courageous spirits high: the perilous path to glory pleases them,
as does the making of a reputation proud with their right hand,
which Fortune could never grant in leisured times of peace.

But Hannibal restored his troops inside a fortified camp,
exhausted they from the march, frostbitten and numbed;
and he consoled them with the pleasing news that the road
to Rome was over flat land, the city itself in their grasp.
He could not, though, let his warlike plans stagnate,
his care of affairs, himself alone unable to suffer inaction.
Upon a time armed Gallic bands had invaded the land
and blessed towns of Italy to spread confusion and fear
on account of their might: soon impious war impressed
itself upon Tarpeius[2] and the conquered citizens of Rome.
While Hannibal was working on the fickle Gauls with gifts,
and, flattering their wayward minds, called them to arms,
the consul, Scipio, had sailed his fleet with all despatch
along the coast, returning from Massilia's[3] shore;
the two great generals had fulfilled their separate tasks
by land and sea, when a very present danger brought
their camps together and sowed the seeds of a great defeat.
The consul arrived and the armies confronted each other,
and Fortune put an end to delay, when the troops on seeing
the foe demanded the sign for a fierce full frontal attack:
"The distant land that bears the name of Spain is our spoil,"
as Hannibal's mighty voice resounded through his throng
of soldiery, "The Pyrenees and savage Rhone have both obeyed
our commands and Rutulian Saguntum is but smoke and dust.
In haste we marched through Gaul, and armoured Punic horse
traversed the route that gave Amphitryon's labouring son
such pause, our cavalry men defied the heights to prance
on peaks and the Alps resounded to echoing snorting steeds."

The consul also summoned his men to glory and death,
"The enemy, men, is a force that is spent and broken by frost
and rocks, which scarce can drag along its nerveless limbs.
And see! These men have crossed the sacred peaks and
steeps precipitous, so let them learn how much more tall
our ramparts are than Hercules' walls, and which the harder task -
to conquer hills, or breach your line! Allow him empty boasts,
so long as the Alps confront them again in their headlong flight
from a grave defeat. The gods have driven them here, led them
across the tops so they may soak our Latin countryside

[2] In 390 BCE the Gauls from the north of Italy took and burned Rome. Tarpeius was the name of a Roman family of whom Sp. Tarpeius was commander of the citadel when invaded by the Sabines. His daughter Tarpeia was supposed to have opened the citadel to the invaders and was crushed beneath their shields as her reward. Thereafter the rock on the summit of the Capitol from which condemned criminals were thrown was called the Tarpeian Rock.

[3] Massilia (modern Marseilles) was founded by colonists from Phocaea in A. Minor.

in Punic blood, and leave their bones behind in hostile soil.
Is this the Carthage that sent a force before to sink beneath
the waves, lie buried in the deeps beside the Aegatian isles,
or does another city, new born, launch war against us now?"

He spoke these words, diverting his troops to Ticinus'[4] banks.
That river's glaucous stream in its shallow draught bed
is clear of pollution and turbulence both, and gently draws
along its bright and limpid waters, transparent and green.
You'd scarce credit it flows. The birds compete in sweet song
upon shady banks on either side, while the gentle sound
of the sparkling waters' idle flow induces soothing sleep.

Dawn's light was showing at the fade of night as shadows fled,
and Sleep had employed his apportioned hours to the full –
the consul prepared to examine the lie of the land and the hills
close by, to learn as well the disposition of the plains, while Hannibal
too nurtured similar cares in his heart and an equal concern.
And so they both drew close, escorted by swift troops of horse.

But when the roiling clouds of dust proclaimed the enemy
was on the march, and the close advancing beat of the cavalry's
hooves, thundering, made groan the ground and shrill horse cries
drowned, overcame the trumpet's strident blast, "To arms,
to arms, my warriors!" both rival generals cried aloud.
Both shared a restless courage and an equal lust for fame,
impelled by a passion for battle and war that made them uniform.

With no delay the combatants came close together 'till
a mere spear thong's assisted cast across the plain now kept
them separate, when of a sudden a portent in the clear
and cloudless sky turned all men's eyes and minds
to the heavenly stars. A hawk, now flying a course
direct from the Carthaginian south, ferociously attacked
a flock of Venus' favourite and well loved birds, some doves,
of which the hawk with beak and talons and savage blows
from its wings did lacerate and send to death, some fifteen birds.
There was no end to his desire, and his thirst for fresher blood
increased, as he stooped upon the final dove, quite terrified
by its fellows' fate, uncertain of its flight, its wings at odds,
until a bird of Jupiter, arriving from the rise of Phoebus' sun,
an eagle, forced the hawk turn tail for refuge in the flimsy clouds.
And then the dove descended gladly and quite unscathed
toward the Roman standards, where Scipio, the consul's son,
was brandishing his shining arms with a childish strength,
then belling her note not twice, but thrice, she plucked
at the plume on his helmet's crest and returned to the skies.

Liger cried out, a man who was skilled in reading the gods'

[4] The Ticinus was a tributary of the Po and the site of Hannibal's first victory in Italy.

advice and foretelling the future from the messages of birds,
"For sixteen years within the bounds of Italy, lord Hannibal,
you will pursue the men of Rome like that bold hawk pursued
the doves, and win much booty and plunder stained with blood.
But check your threats! For the eagle of Jove, his squire, behold,
denies you Italy's realm. I know thee, who thou art, o father of gods!
Be present now and confirm the omen, father, of your bird.
For unless in false flight the bird makes liars out of gods,
the special task of the boy, will be to finalize the fate of Libya,
defeated, and win a greater name than that of the Carthaginian[5]."

But Bogus sang a happier prophecy for Hannibal's reign,
declared the hawk propitious and that the slaughtered doves
in the sky portended disaster for Rome and Venus' descendants.
Then suiting action to the word he first hurled his trusty spear
against the enemy as if prompted by some god and aware of fate.
And it flying far across the vast emptiness of the open plain
had fallen short of its mark had not Catus let loose his reins,
intent on gaining the glory of the first engagement in the war,
had given his horse its head to meet head on the javelin.
Although already flagging in its flight, it found its wanted mark,
and gained the power to kill from the enemy himself and struck
between the temples on the brow of a man intent on self-sacrifice.

The armies advance at the charge across the plain and the din
is huge, as all the riders haul back on the reins to lift the heads
of their steeds, then give the horses their heads, who then rear
to the sky to plunge onward and swiftly storm across the plain,
and scarcely leave the slightest sign of hoof-prints in the dust.
A speedy troop of the Boii[6], Crixus in charge and in front, slams
its bulky bodies into the leading Roman ranks to block them;
this Crixus, so proud of his line – he claimed Brennus as ancestor –
claimed too the sack of the Capitol hill in his honours roll.
The boss of his shield portrayed the Gauls as they weighed
the gold on the sacred height of the Tarpeian hill, poor fool.
The warrior's milk white neck was alight with a collar of gold,
his clothes were striped with gold, his sleeves were stiff
with gold, while his helmet's crest glistened too with gold.

The leading phalanx of the Camertes[7] was smitten and smashed
by their huge impact, as the dense tidal wave of the Boii rushed
through their lines; hard on their heals, increasing their ranks,
the vile Senones[8]; and borne and crushed down by the chests
of the horse, men's bodies tumbled at random all over the plain.
The fields are awash, deep in men's blood and their horses' blood

[5] The boy will ultimately be known as P. Cornelius Scipio Africanus, conqueror of Hannibal and sacker of Carthage.
[6] A Gallic tribe.
[7] The men of Camerium, a town in Umbria.
[8] They are 'vile' (*infandi* / unspeakable) because in 390 BCE this same tribe captured Rome.

that drowns in gore the slippery prints of the embattled cavalry.
The crushing blows of hooves dispatch the men already half dead
and the horse, as they circle, bespatter the ground with a dark
miasmic mist and drench their armour in blood that's their own.
The first successful javelin thrown belonged to proud Pelorus,
stained red with your blood as you died, young Tyrrhenus[9].
For while you inspired the men with your horn, fired minds
for battle, renewed their passion to wound with your song,
the barbarian's shaft stuck fast in your throat and windpipe,
and cut off with a fatal wound your trumpet's harsh call –
that sound the last to come from the lips of the dying man,
which faltered through his horn, as his mouth was made mute.
And Crixus killed both Pisces and Laurus, the latter hand
to hand with a sword, while a gleaming spear from the banks
of the Po brought Pisces' death. For as he strove to turn
aside and by a wheel to the left thought so to foil his foe,
the deadly spear pierced both the rider's thigh and equally
the horse's naked flank to bring about a double death.
He plucked also his shaft from the gory neck of Venulus
and laid you low, Farfarus, while the blade was still warm,
and Tullus too, born and bred beside Velinus' [10]chill lake,
a noble ornament to Italy and a name to be remembered,
had the fates granted longer life, or Carthage kept the faith[11];
next Remulus, and other names well celebrated once in war,
the Magii of Tibur and Metaurus from Hispellum, Clanius -
the spear of Crixus in doubt as to where next to strike and wound.

The men of Carthage had no room to fight. The berserker's rage
of the Gauls filled all the plain; not one of these Celts hurled spears
in vain, but every time the steel found its mark in Italian flesh.
Amongst his petrified allies Quirinius displayed great gallantry,
a man incapable of flight, whose pleasure it was stout heartedly
to face impending death head on, when the battle went awry.
He goaded his horse with his spear while hurling javelins,
to see if he could clear a path with steel and burst through
to the king; intent on death, he risked all to seek the fame
which he could never gain. A deep groin wound felled Teutalus,
beneath whose massive falling bulk the very earth did shake.
And Sarmens fell, a man who vowed that if victorious
that day he'd dedicate his golden hair, lord Mars, to you,
his hair that rivalled gold, and the russet topknot of the Gauls.
The Fates though dragged him down to the shades, his vow
unheard, his hair unshorn; his steaming blood soaked snow
white limbs and the ground grew red, bedewed with gore.
Ligaunus was not slowed down by the javelin confronting him,
but rushed directly at Quirinius and brandished his sword

[9] See Duff's note *ad loc.* '(He) gives the name of Tyrrhenus to a trumpeter, because this epithet is often applied to the trumpet which was invented by the *Tyrrheni* (the Greek name for the Etruscans or Tuscans).
[10] Velinus was the name of a lake and river in the region of the Sabines.
[11] That is to say if the Carthaginians had not broken the treaty and precipitated the war.

in his face and stretching to full height struck, and the left
arm, severed, where tough muscles attach the arm, hung
for a moment above the slackened reins, as life fled;
and the hand, while twitching still, attempted to regain
the reins and unknowing imitate the horseman's usual style.
Vosegus then decapitated him, striking from behind, and, carrying
the helmet by its plume with the dead man's head inside,
he hailed his ancestral gods with the war cry of his tribe.

And while the tribes of Gaul dealt these deaths across the plain,
the consul roused his squadrons of troops to battle in hot haste
from the camp and led in person the charge against the enemy,
astride his huge white horse. He led the pick of the youth from all
of wealthy Italy - the Marsians and the men of Cora and the pride
of Laurentum and the Sabine soldiery who cast the javelin,
and men of Tuder, who worship Mars, from their base in the hills,
the Falerii too, who dress in the flaxen cloth their home provides
and those men whom Catillus' fruit trees feed beneath the walls
of Hercules' own shrine beside the silently flowing stream of Anio,
and those that Hernica's crags did send, men toughened by the ice
cold waters there, and those sent by Casinum's meadows and mist.
The children of the dominant imperial power were going to war,
condemned by the gods, young men doomed never to return.
Then Scipio spurred his horse where the battle's whirlpool's maw
engulfed the troops and, fired by the carnage among his men
made offerings to the dead, killing Labarus and Padus in turn,
and Caunus and Brucus, hard to kill despite his many wounds,
and Larus, a man who rolled his eyes with a Gorgon's gaze.
Pugnacious Leponticus fell, his fate a melancholy doom;
he blocked the way and fiercely seized the consul's reins,
and, though an infantryman, stretched up to the rider's height,
when the heavy sword bit deep in the midst of his brow to split
his head in two upon his neck, but Batus, struggling with the horse

in a fury, and warding off the incoming blows with his shield,
was laid prostrate upon the yellow sand by a blow from the horse,
his features obliterated quite by the trampling hooves.
The Roman general raged in a fury across the turbulent plain,
just as the Thracian North-wind victorious stirs from its depths
the whole Aegean sea in its entirety; the sailor is tossed far
and wide on the deep and a fleet of ships shipwrecked,
and all the Cyclades are inundated with white-capped surf.

And Crixus nurtured but a slender hope of salvation, but armed
his mind with a contempt of death; his bristling beard ran red
with bloody foam, his contorted face grew pale with rage,
while his hair grew matted and foul with a coating of dust.
He launched at Tarius, engaged in the fight next Scipio,
and thunders against the man with a hail of savage blows,
while Tarius rolled on the ground, as the death dealing spear
impelled him headlong and into the tangled reins of his horse,

which panicking drags him along, feet caught in those reins.
His blood left long trace marks, bespattering the battlefield,
while the trailing spear etched errant patterns in the sand.
The consul praised the young man as he died and prepared
to avenge his noble soul, when a dreadful war cry struck
his ears and he realized from the din that Crixus drew near,
although he knew him not by sight. His rage ascended at his
approach and Scipio fixed his gaze on the victim he desired.
Then stroking his horse's neck to please and urge him on,
he whispered to his steed, 'The common herd and lesser foes
can wait, my Garganus; the gods do summon us to greater work.
You see how mighty Crixus comes? I pledge to you as prize
that saddle cloth that glows with Tyrian purple hues -
barbaric finery – and you shall be gifted reins of gold!"
He spoke, and with a mighty cry roused Crixus out
to fight, demanding ample space to clash upon the plain.
A matching fury fired his foe who took no backward step.
The battle lines obeyed and made way to grant a space
on either side wherein the fight was staged in open ground.
As great as giant earthborn Mimas was on Phlegra's[12] fields,
when he raised the standards there to shock the sky with arms,
now Crixus wrenched a tortured cry from out his savage breast
to fire his anger more with ululation fit to make the hackles rise,
"When Rome was taken and burned did none survive to tell
how powerful were the strong right arms that Brennus' folk
did bring to war? Well, learn it now!" he said and hurled
his knotted and fire hardened dreadful spear, a shaft
to shake a city's gate. It flew and made an horrifying sound,
but, thrown extravagantly hard, misjudged the range
and passed in its flight beyond an enemy now too close.
To whom, "Be sure you tell the shades and Brennus dead
how far from Rome's Tarpeian rock you fell," the consul said,
"was never allowed yourself to look upon the sacred Capitol."
Then boosting his spear with a thong and the speed of his horse,
his throw matched the bulk of his man, so it sped on its way
to pierce the massed linen folds[13], and the rawhide shield
to measure the whole of its blade, trapped deep in his chest.
He fell, laid low, to stretch his ruined length in the dust,
while the smitten earth groaned beneath his armoured weight.
Just so, when homes are built upon the shores of Tuscany[14],
a mass of rock is dropped from above to battle with the waves
and unseen tides - loud the crash as it impacts the sea from above:
and Nereus[15] roars, and the waters, split apart by the impact,
receive the crushing mass of masonry beneath the angry sea.
Its leader lost, the Celtic host entrusts itself to headlong flight.
On a single life depended their hopes and excess of zeal.

[12] Phlegra in Macedonia, later called Pallene was the battlefield where once the Titans and the gods of Olympus had fought in the heavenly wars of succession.
[13] For mention of what seems an unlikely form of breastplate see, Bk. 3, 272.
[14] A favourite location for wealthy houses over looking the sea.
[15] A sea god, son of Oceanus and Tethys, and father by Doris of the Nereids.

Just as the hunter on Mt. Picanus'[16] bush covered heights
beats haunts of beasts, and, amidst the trackless scrub,
injects throughout their crowded lairs destruction dire –
while wildfires gather their secret strength and flames,
and the pine tree tops are wrapped bit by bit in black
smoke, eddying dense and rich with roiling coils…
Soon fires are suddenly alight across the mountain's side -
a sudden noise and the wild beasts flee, as do the birds,
and deep in the valleys far below the heifers are afraid.

When Mago[17] saw the mob of Gauls turned back and their first
and only possible effort fail (such is their character) he called
his own foot troops and cavalry to fight, and from all sides
they came, some horses with bridles and others with none.
And now the men of Italy retreat, hauling back on the reins,
and now stark fear in turn pulls back the Carthaginian horse;
now one side wheels to the right in ever tightening curves,
but others plait a spiralling course to the left to ring the foe;
this way and that the two sides interweave their serried ranks
and then give way to disengage in a skilled withdrawal[18].
Just so the North and East winds, when in conflict, drive
the sea now this way, now that and carry the mass
of the deep along with their blasts at variance with self.

The Carthaginian general, alight with purple and gold,
now flew to the fray, Fear, Terror and Fury his companions.
And when he raised the shining circle of his Gallician shield[19]
and cast its mighty beam of reflected light across the plain,
all hope and courage fell away, and any shame in retreat
abandoned fearful minds; men's fixed intent was flight
and not a noble death, their prayers – that the earth engulf them.
Just so, when the tiger stalks from her Caucasian caves,
the plains are abandoned and every beast in terror at
her furious mask seeks safe haven, while all conquering
she strolls through emptied vales, and bares her teeth,
and little by little draws back her lips as if to mangle fallen prey
and with wide gaping jaws the tiger meditates on butchery.
Nor Metabus nor Ufens could escape the Carthaginian,
despite the latter's height and fleetness of winged foot,
while Metabus' horse was given full rein to gallop away.
The spear with its gleaming point despatched him to the shades,
while Hannibal's sword brought Ufens down, hamstrung,
to put a bloody end both to him and his name for speed.
And next he gifted Sthenius to death and Laurus and from
a cooler clime one Collinus, whom Lake Fucinus[20] had reared

[16] A mountain in Apulia.
[17] The brother of Hannibal.
[18] Duff, *ad loc.* indicates that Silius is here imitating Vergil's description of the juvenile cavalry manoeuvres depicted at *Aeneid* 5. 545ff.
[19] For a description of Hannibal's shield see Bk. 2.395ff.
[20] Lake Fucinus lies in the Apennine hills in the country of the Marsi.

in its viridian cave, allowing him to swim its watery ways.
Spear struck then Massicus became their companion in death,
he born on the sacred peak of the eponymous vine clad hill[21],
and nurtured by the Liris' stream, its surface undisturbed
as it conceals its course and, unchanged by any rains,
sweeps past the silent banks with its sparkling stream.
A frenzy of slaughter arose so great there were scarce
enough arms to match the need. Shield clashed with shield,
foot pressed on foot, and the nodding helmet crests
flicked enemy brows as men's muscles trembled with strain.

Three brothers devoted themselves to the fight before the first
line, sons whom Carthaginian Barce bore to the Spartan born
Xanthippus, fertile her womb she gave birth in the times of war.
The history of Greece, their sire the general, and noble Sparta's name
and Regulus' neck subjected to the chains of Spartan slavery
had made swell with pride in the past their overweening hearts.
They burned to prove in war their line and Spartan parentage
and, once the war was won, to visit then the chilly heights
of Taygetos and swim the native stream of Eurotas, to look
upon the sacred rituals and laws writ down by Lycurgus' hand.
Some deity and three Italian brothers of equal age
and spirit ensured that they would never reach the land
of Sparta. They were born in and sent from Egeria's
tall groves, despatched by harsh Aricia[22], but cruel Fate
denied them the sight of the lake and temple of Diana[23].
Eumachus and Critias and Xanthippus too, so very proud
of his father 's name, swept up in the surge of battle, all
engaged with the men of Rome, as lions wage furious war
amongst themselves and fill the bush and plains and far
flung settlements of huts with a coughing, breathless roar –
and every Moor takes nimble flight in concealing crags
and trackless rocks. His African wife stills her babies' cries
by pressing them both to suckle at her milky breasts;
the lions' din is horrendous, as is the crunch of broken bones
in bloodied jaws. The limbs still struggle under savage teeth –
just so Egeria's youth, here fearsome Virbius and Capys too,
and Albanus their comrade in arms now sprang to the fore.
In a crouching stance then Critias disembowelled Albanus,
with a sword to the gut and in a sad and wretched spectacle
his intestines slithered out to fill his shield in its entirety,
and Eumachus did for Capys, who, though he clung with all
his strength to his shield as to part of himself, a cruel sword's
cut severed his strong left arm, removing it from the shield,
and the luckless limb clung still to the shield, tenacious as
it fell, holding stubbornly fast to the tumbling arms.

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[21] Mount Massicus in Campania is famous for its vines and wines.
[22] Duff, *ad loc.* 'The spring of the nymph Egeria was near Aricia; and here were the grove and temple of Diana, where the priest obtained his office by killing his predecessor: hence the epithet "ruthless." '
[23] The Lake of Nemi.

So two were dead and Virbius remained the final prize,
the whom Xanthippus, feigning terrified flight, then slew
with his sword, while his rigid spear cut Eumachus down,
and at last these twin deaths made equal the fight.
Then each of the two men transfixed the other's breast
with a sword and in turn, life fled, they departed the fray.
So blessed in death whom *pietas* [24]adds to the shades!
The centuries to come will wish for brothers such as these,
whose fame will be forever remembered and hymned,
if only my verse has the strength to endure its day, to look
upon its distant kin, and Apollo does not grudge me fame.

Then Scipio's cries stopped the troops in their tracks
across the plain, so long as his voice was strong, "Where take
you the standards? What panic has unmanned you? For if
it seems a horrid lot to man the first battle line and face
the hostile van, then, men, stand behind me to play the voyeur,
all terror gone! These warriors were sired by men enslaved![25]
Just where to flee? The vanquished have no hopes. Seek we the Alps?
You think that walled and crenelated Rome extends
her hands in slavish supplication at this critical time?
I see the rape of children and the slaughter of parents now,
and the sacred Vestal altar's flames snuffed out with blood.
Prevent this sacrilege!" He continued in this vein at full
volume ,until his voice became choked with a thickness of dust,
then seizing his reins with his left hand, grasping his sword
in his right he exposed his broad breast, and his drawn
sword threatened first himself and his recalcitrant men.

When Jupiter observed this battle from Olympian heights,
the noble consul's perilous plight provoked his heart.
He summons Mars and addressed him with fatherly voice,
"Unless you take part in this fight, my son, it will doubtless be
that great hearted hero's last harrowing labour; snatch him away
from the fight in his fury, forgetful of self, delighting in butchery.
Halt Hannibal! The wretch hopes for more from Scipio's death
than from the total of the butcher's bill in it entirety.
And more! You see that the boy that already trusts the skill
of his right arm in the fray and aims to give the lie to his years,
who thinks maturity in war is long time in the ripening,
let him dare his first fight with you as his mentor and guide,
dare splendid feats and be victorious and save his father's life."

Thus Jupiter spoke. And Mars at once summoned his chariot
of war from Thrace, and took up his shield that spews flames
of lightning dire, his helmet too, whose weight was too much
for any other god, and his cuirass that had cost the Cyclopes
much labour and sweat, and brandished aloft his spear

[24] *Pietas* was the defining virtue of Aeneas in Vergil's *Aeneid* and embraced duty to the gods, the state and the family.
[25] Silius refers to the Carthaginians defeated in the first Punic War a generation ago.

that was sated with blood in the Titanic wars of succession,
his chariot filling the plain. In his train his companion troop –
Rage, Furies and all the countless forms of death and gore,
the while Bellona laboured hard at the chariot's reins,
urging on the team of four horses, plying her pitiless goad.
A terrible tempest burst forth from the sky's immensity,
enfolding in darkness the earth with billowing clouds
of driven and stormy black, and all the land of Italy shook
and trembled at the god's approach, at the sound which
the river abandoned its banks, flowed back to its source.

The Garamantian troops had hemmed the Roman general in
with their spears and were preparing an unprecedented gift
for Hannibal, the prize of a consul's arms and dripping head,
but Scipio stood firm, determined not to yield to Fortune's blows,
and, hardened to the carnage, strained to hurl back spear
for spear, his limbs now soaked with blood, his own and that
of the foe. The plume was cut from his helmet, and the men
of Africa pressed in around him at ever closer javelin range,
and one cast a dart whose cruel point transfixed the general.

And when the son espied the weapon pierce his father's side,
his tears began to flow, he shook, a sudden pallor overtook
his face and his anguished cry burst its way to the stars.
Once, twice he tried to turn his sword against himself, anticipate
his father in death: once, twice did Mars divert his rage against
the Carthaginians. The boy, intrepid, dashes through a storm
of enemy spears, and matches the charge of Mars pace for pace.
At once the ranks gave way and suddenly there appeared upon
the plain a broad pathway. Protected by the heavenly shield
the boy mowed down the enemy upon the arms of the dead,
laid low both the owner of the dart, and many more men
he slew before his father's eyes, a looked-for vengeful sacrifice.
Then hastily plucking the spear from his father's tough bones
he hefted his father across his shoulders and neck, and ran.
The host was amazed at the spectacle, held back their shafts
and the fierce Carthaginians gave ground, as did all the men
of Spain. His youth and noble sense of duty produced an awe
struck silence across the length and breadth of the battlefield.
Then Mars from his lofty chariot, "You will sack the citadel
of Carthage," he said, "and force her citizens to sue for peace.
Yet in your long life, dear boy, there will never dawn a day
more glorious than this! Exalted and blessed your noble self,
true son of Jupiter! In future greater deeds may lay in wait,
but no gift else can rival this!" And as the sun began to set,
his journey over, Mars departed to the clouds and sky.

The moon in her downward course was putting night to bed,
while her brother's chariot breathed light upon her, and from
the eastern seas the rosy fingered fires arose amidst the blue.
Yet Scipio, in fear of the fatal plains and the level ground the men

of Carthage loved, made for the Trebia's stream and the Apennines.
Swift days were stolen by the toilsome effort of the forced march,
until Hannibal came to the swift flowing stream of the Po to find
the bridge by which the Romans had crossed the river afloat
in midstream. Its cables were cut and the bridge destroyed.
And while Hannibal sought for a ford with a gentle approach
to the stream and looked for quieter waters, riding around
the countryside, meantime he felled the riverside copse
of alder trees to build a fleet of transport boats to cross the Po:
and see, there came another consul to camp beside the Trebia,
instructed to make the lengthy voyage from Sicilian Pelorus,
a scion of the Gracchi[26]. The family of this great man was well
renowned for courage, and many of his sculptured ancestors
shone brightly with distinctions won both in war and in peace.

Nor did the Carthaginians fall short when they pitched camp
in meadowland across the river, "Is there another consul left
in Rome, a third? Shall Sicily supply a further force of troops
in arms? See, all the men of Latium, and all the sons of Rome
are gathered here! Now let the leading men of Rome endorse
a pact with me, demanding laws and covenants that bind!
And you that were granted life amidst the weapons of war,
a life unfortunate, so may you live again to grant your son
a second chance at glory such as this. And let not fate bestow
on you the chance to die in battle's heat, when destiny calls.
To fall in the fray belongs to me!" These his furious words.
Impatient he sent a wing of Massylian light armed troops
to the edge of Scipio's camp to vex and provoke the enemy.

The Romans did not think it right that their safety depended on
the palisade alone, as shuttered gates kept out the spears.
They made a break, levelling the palisade and there before
them the Gracchan consul flew. The horse hair crest of his
Auruncan[27] helmet billowed in the wind, his ancestral cloak
glowed blood red on his shoulders. Looking back to the ranks
he bellowed at his men, and wherever the foe massed deep in close
packed order against him he broke through to speed across the plain,
as a torrent roars down precipitate from Pindus' mountain peak
to the plains and with monstrous clangour rolls downhill the slab
of mountain torn from the hill; and everywhere in its onward path
the cattle and wild animals and woods are dragged along.
The foaming river's rapid song is heard in the valleys of rock.

Not even if the glory of Maeonian Homer's voice was mine,
or Phoebus gifted me one hundred mouths to sing my song,
could I describe so many deaths, how many were wrought
by the mighty consul's hand and Hannibal's furious rage.
Murranus, Libya's general, and Ausonius, who led the men

[26] This phrase is taken from Duff's translation.
[27] See Duff's not *ad loc*, ' "Auruncan" seems to mean "Roman" or "Italian". The Aurunci were an ancient people of Campania.'

of Tarentum were veterans schooled in the work of war,
had at each other, hand to hand and face to face.
Anxur[28] had dispatched Murranus from its windswept hills,
while Phalantus hailed from Tritonis'[29] pure and sacred lake.
As soon as the consul appeared, ablaze in his splendid cloak,
Cupencus, although bereft of the one half of his sight, but still
fit for war with one eye, in boldness hurled his javelin
to fix it quivering in the topmost edge of the consul's shield.
At which the consul, flushed with rage, declared, ' Lose now
what sight remains to shine in that fearsome, wounded brow,
rash fool!' With that he cast his spear with unerring aim
to plant its head within that dread and threatening eye.
And nor did Hannibal's good right hand rage any the less;
Unlucky, Varenus falls to him, all dressed in armour white,
Varenus from Mevania, for whom Fulginia[30]did guide
the plough through pastures rich, and in the open fields
Clitumnus' cooling stream fulfils the thirst of snowy bulls[31].
But the gods were unkind and all in vain the sacred beasts
so huge he raised with thankless care upon the hill of Jupiter.
The Spaniards were nimble in attack and the Moors more so.
Here Roman javelins vied with Libyan spears to hide the sky
in their flight and all the level ground as far as the banks
of the river was everywhere pierced by quivering shafts.
The men were packed so tight the dead were unable to fall.

The hunter Allius from Argyripa, had set out from the fields
of Daunus, his weapons crude as he ranged the Apulian plain
on his horse. Now plunged in the midst of an enemy host,
his right hand hurled his Apulian darts to deadly effect.
His chest was clad in the horrid skin of a Samnite bear,
his helmet made strong with the tusks of an ancient boar.
But while he fought as if rambling through a lonesome wood,
or putting to flight the beasts upon the slopes of Garganus,
now Mago, and now the fierce Maharbal spotted him
together, as bears urged on by hunger across the rocks
that intervene, attack a fearful bull with double assault,
nor does their fury let them share the prize – just so fierce Allius
was felled by the javelins hurled in turn by each of his foes.
The twin strident shafts of Moorish yew transfixed both
his sides: the spear points met and clashed in his inmost heart;
it was quite unclear which one of the shafts had caused his death.
By now the Roman eagles were random throughout the ranks,
and – wretched sight – now Hannibal drove the frightened mass
of stragglers towards the river's banks, intent on drowning them.

[28] A coastal town of the Volsci now known as Terracina.
[29] See Book 3, 322.
[30] A local goddess who gave her name to the town of Varenus' origin.
[31] The Umbrian town of Mevania is watered by the river Clitumnus whose waters were alleged to turn the cattle that drank from it a snowy white.

Then Trebia's fatal flood began a fresh assault upon the worn out
troops, gratifying Juno's pleas by rousing awake his water's stream.
The banks collapsed to swallow up the bodies of the fugitives
and held their desperation fast in the mud's voracious grasp.
Nor could they struggle onwards, nor yet extract their feet,
stuck deep in the quagmire, progress imprisoned and trapped
by the gluttonous sludge, while the banks had been undermined
and mired the men or laid them low in the treacherous marsh.
They struggled now one, now another to climb the slippery slope,
each strove to make a path for himself through the maze of mud.
They fought a battle with the grassy ground as it yielded beneath,
and slipping fell, were suffocated by the mud around them.
One man, a speedy swimmer, little by little was making safe
his ground, and striving to raise his body, was grasping the turf
at the top and emerging at last from the watery depths,
and was pierced by a spear and pinned pendent from the bank.
Another had lost his weapon and grasping an enemy tight
in his arms, who, thrashing in the water, drowned them both.
Death possessed a thousand faces. Ligus fell upon the land,
but the hero's lips were thrust above the river's stream
inhaling the blood-stained waters in gasping draughts.
The fair Irpinus had all but managed to swim from mid-
stream, calling aloud for help from his company, when a horse,
quite maddened by its many wounds, and borne along
by the flood struck down the weary man and drowned him.

The disaster climaxed when a troop of elephants, their towers
upon their backs, were seen being forced through the waves.
They charged headlong through the stream, like a crag ripped away
from a towering peak, and drove the Trebia's tide, quite innocent
of such fears, before their chests, bestriding the foaming stream.
Adversity puts manhood to the test and virtue strives for fame
through hardship, all unafraid of the steep and dangerous path.
And indeed Fibrenus did not deign to die a dishonourable death,
devoid of fame: 'We shall display ourselves,' he declared,
'and Fortune shall not conceal my death beneath the flood.
I shall trial make of what a Roman sword cannot subdue,
of what cannot be penetrated, pierced by my Italian javelin.
Then stretching up he cast and hurled his wicked shaft
to leave it planted in the wounded elephant's right eye.
With dreadful trumpeting the beast responded as the spear
hit piercing home, and it lifted up its injured bloody head,
turned tail and fled, as its master fell from his lofty perch.
And then the Romans pressed home the attack with spears
and storms of arrows, dared hope for a kill, and many a wound
was made across the beast's vast shoulders and flanks;
the creature's hide and dusky back now sprouted spears,
a veritable forest of spears vibrated on its stricken back,
until it fell and with its bulk did block the stream beneath.

Then see, over there! Although his limbs were slowed

by multiple wounds, lord Scipio entered the pitiless stream
to plague his enemies with a superfluity of slaughtering.
The Trebia was clad in corpses, with the helmets and shields
of the slain – scarce a glimpse could be caught of the water beneath.
He felled Mazaeus with a spear, laid Gestar low with a sword;
then Thelgon of Cyrene, his forebears from the Peloponnese -
for Scipio then hurled at him a javelin which he had snatched
from out the rushing stream, and all its length, from point
to base, did enter and transfix the gaping mouth of Thelgon.
His teeth vibrated in death against the timber of the shaft.
Nor was there rest in death: the Trebia took the corpse,
distended now, to the Po, and the Po in turn to the sea.
You, Thapsus, also fell and were denied in death a grave.
What use to him his western home or the sacred groves,
where goddesses guard the trees that bear golden fruit[32].

The Trebia swelled and lifted itself from its depths,
and fiercely drove on forward its total eddying mass,
now exercising all its strength; an inland tidal wave
raged, followed by fresh torrents of thundering spume.
The general's rage waxed greater when he felt the flood
renewed and said, 'You, perfidious Trebia, will pay
harsh penalties to me and well deserved: I shall spread
your streams across the fields of Gaul, remove your name,
shall block your spring at source, will not allow your stream
to greet the Po! What sudden madness has transformed
you, foolish one, and rendered you a Carthaginian stream?'

The rising mass of water crashed against him as he cursed,
and pressed upon his shoulders with its hollowed waves.
The general, though, stood firm against the rushing stream
and took the water's rampant weight upon his shield.
And yet the waves that reared in a strident storm behind
him also soaked his helmet's topmost crest with spray.
The river god now undermined his footing, did not allow
a firm progression to be made; rocks crashed loud together,
were heard far off; waves joined their parent's affray,
inspired to fight, and the river abandoned its banks.
And then he raised at once his voice and dripping locks,
his head with its crown of glaucous weed: ' You dare
to threaten condign punishment and more, to destroy
my name, my kingdom's enemy? How many bodies do
I carry, slain by you right hand? So choked am I by the shields
and helmets of men you have killed, my course is changed.
You see my depths flow red with blood, reverse their flow.
Restrain your hand or rather attack the neighbouring plains!'

With Venus by his side, concealed in a shroud of dark cloud,
from his lofty viewpoint Vulcan observed these events.

[32] Thapsus hailed from the far west of the Mediterranean, where the Hesperides guarded the Golden Apples of the sun. See, Bk. 3. 285.

Then raising his hands to the heavens Scipio weighed his words,
'My native gods, beneath whose favour Dardan Rome is safe,
did you keep me safe in the recent battle's heat for a fate
like this? Perhaps I seemed unworthy to die by the hand
of a warrior? Return me, my son, to the dangers of war,
of the foe! Allow me to die a warlike death of the kind
my brother[33] and my country would approve!' And Venus, moved
by his appeal did groan, and aimed at the river the strength[34]
of her unconquerable spouse. Fire spread its flames
across the river's banks, and greedily consumed the years
and years of shade, long nurtured by the river's stream.
And every copse was burned, and Vulcan, victorious,
roared, crackling, released from his restraining reins.
The fir trees' foliage was burnt and that of alder and pine,
while, stripped down to its trunk, the poplar dismissed
skywards the birds that were wont to dwell on its limbs.
The voracious flames devoured the moisture drawn
from the very depths of the stream - in the savage heat
the blood on the banks baked dry. The rugged earth
itself split, cracking on every side, and broken gaped
wide open and ashes settled deep on the river's bed.

Now Eridanus wonders that his eternal stream is stilled
of a sudden; a tearful chorus of Nymphs then filled
their innermost caves with startled ululation dire.
Three times he strove to lift his smoke blackened head,
and three times Vulcan seized and hurled a flaming brand
to plunge his head once more beneath the steaming flood,
until at last the kindling reeds burnt bare the deity's head.
But then his voice and heartfelt pleas were given heed –
he was allowed upon request to retain his former course.
Then Scipio recalled his weary troops from Trebia's stream
to a hill that had been fortified, with Gracchus by his side.
The Carthaginian lavished much praise upon the stream,
and set in place high altars of turf upon the friendly banks,
quite unaware of what momentous favours the gods were set
to grant, and the grief that Trasimene prepared for Italy.

Flaminius had recently taken up arms to attack the tribe
of the Boii and as general had won the glory of an easy war
in crushing a people both fickle and lacking in guile.
A different task, however, to match the Carthaginian general.
A man born in ominous times, Saturnia [35] planned a dreadful fate
for him as leader of a worn out state and worthy of the ruin to come.
His first day in office saw him seize the tiller that guides the ship
of state and place the legions under his supreme command –
it was as if a landlubberly man quite ignorant of how to cope

[33] Gnaeus Scipio who had been consul in 222 BCE and was currently campaigning in Spain.
[34] Vulcan's fire.
[35] Juno.

with the sea had taken command of some wretched ship,
seized for himself the role of foul weather, gifted his craft
to be tossed by every storm and carried upon the rocks
by random tides and the master's very own guiding hand -
just so Flaminius assembled an army in haste to march
into Etruria and the sacred town of Cortona, founded long ago
by Corythus, and those Etruscan settlers joined by the blood
of ancestors in kinship and intermarriage with the folk of Italy[36].

Nor did Hannibal's guiding deity delay his intelligence about
these plans begun and the great glory there to win. All things
were wreathed in sleep that grants oblivion of sickly cares,
when Juno, in the likeness of the god of nearby Trasimene,
the hair on her dripping brow adorned with poplar leaves,
awoke his inner heart with sudden cares and disturbed
the general's rest with a voice that could not be ignored:
'O Hannibal, in fame so fortunate, your name a cause of tears
to Latium, had Fortune had you born a Roman then your path
had brought you to the company of mighty gods! Why then delay?
Away with tardiness! For Fortune' favours are brief in span!
The floods of blood you vouched your sire when promising
a war with Rome, so much will flow for you from the veins
of Italy and you will satisfy your father's shade with butchery.
Victorious you will repay me with the honours I deserve.
For I am the mountain lake round which the men who came
from Tmolus[37] dwell, the brooding waters of Lake Trasimene.

Inspired by this advice at once he led his troops, now buoyed
by the god, headlong across the mountain chain before him.
The Apennines raised their pine clad slopes to the skies
above, were frozen hard amidst the treacherous crags.
Deep snow enclosed the forests and from the high peaks
white summits climbed to the stars above the massive drifts.
He gives the word to march. His former fame is like to fade
and die, if after the Alps his way is stopped by any hills.
They clambered up the cloudy summits of up thrust rock.
The traverse complete nor ended nor eased their travails;
the plains were flooded, melt-water swelling the streams,
the trackless fields made inundate with mud and marsh.
And now the leader's bared head in the midst of such
privations is battered by the savage elements, and his eye
leaks pus across his face and cheeks. As he laughed the healers
to scorn, he deemed no perilous price too high to pay
for a chance at war. He gladly sacrifices his looks so long

[36] Duff's note on this passage gives an indication of the complex antiquarianism of Silius which is so difficult to replicate without inordinate obscurity or lengthy footnotes, 'The "Lydians" are the Etruscans, who came originally from Asia and settled in N. Italy: Maeonia is the older name of Lydia. Cortona, a city of Etruria near Lake Trasimene, was said to have been founded by Corythus, a son of Paris and Oenone; the city is called "sacred", because Corythus was worshipped there as a "hero"'.

[37] Tmolus is a mountain in Lydia supposed origin of the Etruscans.

as his march proceeds, nor does he hesitates to gift
his limbs to the cost of war, if victory demands it so –
his sight sufficient still to see as victor the Capitol's hill,
to see a means at close quarters to savage Italian foes.
At last they arrived at the longed for lake after suffering
the harsh conditions of the place, where next by force
of arms he would take many victims to pay for his lost sight.

Now see, the senators sent from Carthage have arrived!
Their mission is not trivial, nor do they bring glad news.
It was the custom of the race that exiled Dido did initiate
to pacify the gods with human sacrifice and – unspeakable! -
to place upon the blazing altars children there as offerings.
Each year the urn cast lot renewed this wretched tradition,
imitating the rites of Diana in Thoas' barbarian realm[38].
Now Hanno, long time foe of Hannibal, demanded the son
of Hannibal as customary victim of the rite divine and lot.
But there was a proper fear of the armoured general's wrath,
and a dreadful image of his return appeared before their eyes.

And Imilce[39] inflamed their fears as she gouged her cheeks
and rent her hair and filled the city with her tearful cries,
like a Bacchant inspired by the recurring festival who speeds
across Pangaea's mount, exhaling the spirit of Bacchus within –
so Imilce harangues the mothers of Carthage as if consumed
by fire: 'My husband, wheresoever in the world's confines
you now wage war, return your standards home. For here
there is a foe more violent, more near. Perhaps beneath
the very walls of Rome you parry the vibrant javelins,
intrepid with your shield, and brandishing a deadly torch
bring arson's flame beneath the Tarpeian temple's roof.
Meanwhile your only son and the heir to your house
is torn away to the altars of Death within his native land.
Go then and ravage the household gods of Italy and take
forbidden paths! Go then, resile from treaties authorized
by all the gods! This is the way in which Carthage repays
you, and such are the honours she grants to you now!
What piety is this that smears its shrines with human gore?
I grieve for the primal cause of sickening human crimes –
their ignorance of gods! Go, pray for things that are just
with pious incense, abhorring fearsome rites of sacrifice!
The godhead is mild and like to man. Henceforth, I pray,
may we deem sufficient the sacrifice of cattle beasts alone.
Or if your is the idée fixe that the gods desire anathema,
fulfil your vows by sacrificing me, who bore the child.
What pleasure in robbing Libya of this boy's future gifts?
Had my husband's mighty promise been before cut short
by the blood stained lot, would not that be a loss to match
that battle at sea where our fleet was lost in the deep[40]?'

[38] These rites are very much part of the plot in Euripides' *Iphigeneia in Tauris.*
[39] The wife of Hannibal.

The senate torn between its fear of Hannibal and the gods
now settled for caution; the choice to be left to him,
should he repudiate the lot, or honour the will of god.
And then was Imilce's mind scarce stable and wracked
with fear of her great-hearted husband's principles.

On avidly hearing this the general at once replied:
'Equated with the gods[41], Mother Carthage? What boon
of mine repays such generosity? What worthy reward
shall I find for you, my parent? Day and night I shall
bear arms! And I will ensure that many a noble Roman
arrives as victim from Italy at your temples at home,
but my boy will be kept to inherit my arms and my war!
You, son, are my sole hope for the salvation of the Tyrian
state, facing Italy's threats, remember, by land and sea,
at war with the sons of Aeneas, so long as life remains.
Advance – the Alps are open – take my task upon you!
And you, my native gods, whose shrines are appeased
with slaughter, rejoice in rites that mothers abhor,
direct to us your joyful faces, wholehearted support.
For I prepare a sacrifice and larger altars I erect.
You, Mago, occupy that mountain summit opposite,
Choaspes, ascend the lesser hills nearby, and let Sychaeus
lead men to the gorge and its mouth through the woods.
As for me, I'll sweep a swift force round Trasimene
to seek for victims to offer up to our gods of war.
The god has openly promised us no meagre victory,
which once seen you may report to our city and home.

[40] The battle off the Aegatian islands in the First Punic War: see, Bk. 1. 35.
[41] They do this by allowing him to decide the fate of his son.

Punica: Book 5

Silius Italicus

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Book 5

Hannibal sets a trap for his enemy and exhorts his troops to fight well. There is a discussion of the name of Lake Trasimene (1-23). Impiously Flaminius discounts evil omens and the dire warnings of the seer Corvinus. He too encourages his men to fight (24-185). The battle of Trasimene (186-687).

The Carthaginian general had seized the Etruscan hills
with an unseen force and in the silent depths of night
had occupied the forest's twisting paths with hidden troops.
On their left lay the vast expanse of an overflowing lake,
which like a slowly heaving sea did inundate and foul
the nearby plains both far and wide with excess mud;
These waters, part of Arnus', son of Faunus, realm
in ancient times, preserve today the name of Trasimene.
His father was Tyrrhenus, a Lydian, Tmolus' pride,
who once had brought Maeonian men a long sea trip
to land on Latium's shore and give his name to the land.
He was the first to demonstrate to men the trumpet's blast,
unheard before, and break the sullen silences of war.
Ambitious in his prayers he reared his son for higher things,
but, fired with love, the nymph Agylle cast away all shame
(for Trasimene could match the gods in fairness of form)
and seized him from the shore and took him into the depths,
her own young heart quite captivated by his youthful loveliness,
nor was she slow to burn with the fire of the Cypriot's shafts.
The Naiads deep in their emerald cave gave solace to the boy,
all fearful he of his lover's embrace and her watery realm.
And so the naming of the lake, a bridal gift, whose deeps, aware
throughout of married bliss, still bear the name of Trasimene.

Now dewy night had all but made complete his chariot's
dark course, but Tithonus' wife[1] had not abandoned yet
her nuptial chamber, but stood and shone inside her door –
the time a traveller is doubtful whether night is gone
or day begun. Flaminius was making his way across rough ground
in front of the standards, his horse behind him in confused haste;
the skirmishers were not in set ranks, the legionnaires
were mixed with the mob, and a host of camp followers,
unsuited to war filled the scene with an ominous din
and sought the battlefield in the mode of deserters.
And then the lake itself exhaled a dense cloud
of blinding fog and stole from the wretched troops
any chance to see, making dark the sky, concealed in night's
dark cloak and pitch black clouds. And nor did Hannibal
forget his guile: he remained in hiding, his sword still sheathed,
and made no attempt to block his enemy's advance.
A path was granted them and the lakeshore lay open wide,
unguarded, as if in a time of peace, but it was a path of no return.
For it was a path that led to a trap beneath the tightly closed

[1] Aurora, the dawn.

and narrowing gorge, a double disaster for those it received –
hemmed in here by the cliffs and here by Trasimene.
A careful watch from the shady mountain-top took note
of the Roman advance, intent on cutting off any flight.
Just so the skilful angler beside a glass like rivulet
weaves osier to make a lightweight wide mouthed net,
and works with special care upon its inner part,
producing through its middle a taper gradatim to tie
together the narrow ends to give the fish, which he hauls
from the stream, a deceptively easy one way path into the trap.

Meanwhile Flaminius gave word for the standards' advance
at speed, driven out of his mind by the fateful storm of events,
until the horses of the sun did lift his flaming chariot from the sea
to spread abroad the light of day. And soon the sun, its disk
reborn, burnt off the clouds, and bit by bit the darkness flowed
back within the earth, dissolved by that brilliant radiance.
And then the birds, an ancient source of augury by Latin law
and custom, when preparing for war and querying the will
of gods regarding the event, refused to be fed, as if aware
of impending grief, and crowed and spurned their feed.
Nor did the bull desist from harsh and mournful bellowing
beside the altars, but rather fled those altars when the axe
was aimed against his flinching and uncertain neck.
And when they strove to drag the standards from the ground,
black blood erupted in their faces, spurted from the wounded dirt,
as Mother Earth herself gave the wretched Romans signs from out
her bloodied lap and omens dire of slaughter soon to come.
The Father of the gods as well, who shakes both earth and sea
with thunder, snatched his bolts from the Cyclops' forge
to hurl them at the Tuscan waters of Lake Trasimene,
and the lake, struck by lightening blasts across its vast extent,
began to smoke and fires broke out upon the waves.
I grieve for vain advice and prodigies that try in vain to strive
with Destiny! I grieve for gods less powerful than Fate!
And now Corvinus, a splendid orator, endowed with a noble name,
upon whose golden helmet sat the bird of Phoebus,
as a memento of his forebear's famous battle feats[2],
full himself of the gods and alarmed by the soldiers' fears,
mixed prayers with advice and spoke these words,
“By the flames of Troy and Tarpeia' s sacred rock,
by the walls of Rome, Consul, and the fate of our sons,
dependant on our warlike outcome here, we beg
you, yield to the gods and wait for a time the more
propitious for our fight! The gods will grant a time
and place for battle; do not think it a cause of contempt
to wait for kinder deities: when shines the hour to bring
both blood and death to Carthage, the standards then

[2] See Duff *ad loc.* 'M.Valerius, when serving against the Gauls in 349 B.C., accepted a challenge to single combat from a gigantic Gaul. A raven perched on his helmet and helped him to victory by attacking his enemy. Hence he received the name of Corvus (raven) or Corvinus.'

will follow of their own accord, the birds will delight
in their feed unmoved and pious earth spew no more blood.
Or does it escape the attention of one well famed in war,
how hostile is Fortune's presence here today? Our foe
is blocking our path to the front; around us wooded hills
do threaten ambuscade, while the spreading lake forbids
escape to the left, and the path through the gorge is tight.
Should you desire to fight with guile and delay the fight,
Servilius will soon be doubling here with his legionnaires.
His legions are as strong as yours, his authority the same.
One must fight with guile. A leader's fame is secondary."

So Corvinus spoke, and the leaders on all sides added too
their pleas and each man, torn by a double fear, now prayed
that the gods should not to fight against Flaminius, while he
should not persist in contention against the gods on high.
Inflamed by this the general's rage now blazed more bitterly,
and, on hearing that a friendly force was near, he raged,
"Was it thus," he said, "you saw me when I charged against
the Boii's battle line, when calamity came our way in the shape
of that dreadful host and filled again Tarpeia' s rock with fear?
How many souls, how many bodies did my right hand dispatch,
bodies born from hostile earth, unlikely to yield their lives
to a single wound! Gigantic limbs lay strewn across the plain
and now ploughed fields press down on monstrous bones.
And shall Servilius join his tardy force to praises that are mine,
so that I cannot win unless I share my triumph with Servilius,
and must rest content with but a paltry share of fame?
To be sure the gods advise! Do not imagine, though, the gods
are like to you that tremble at the trumpet's blast. The sword
is prophet enough and more against the foe, a good right
hand's work an omen very worthy of a Roman warrior!
Perhaps it is your intent, Corvinus, that the consul should mew
himself up in an idle camp? That Hannibal should overcome
Arretium's high walls, throw down in ruins Cortona's citadel,
then seek out Clusium? And press his march at last unscathed
towards the walls of Rome? An empty superstition ill becomes
an army; in a warrior's breast the only healthy deity to thrive
is courage. In the black of night a company of ghosts
surrounds me, ghosts of unburied youths, whose bodies
are tumbled in Trebia's flood and Eridanus' flowing stream."

At once and in the midst of his company and underneath
the standards, deaf to all pleas, he dons his armour one last time.
His helmet was reinforced with bronze and the tawny hide
of a seal, while from its top there rose a triple crest, from which
cascaded down a mane of hair made up of Suabian scalps.
Above all a Scylla was mounted, that brandished the weight
of one broken oar, and the savage jaws of her dogs gaped wide.
Fine booty stripped from Gargenus, the Boii's king he killed,
and which, proud victor, he had placed unbreakable upon his head,
a trophy carried by him into every skirmish and battle he fought.

He put on his breastplate, which was woven from twisted links
of tough iron, embossed with gold and rough to the touch.
He then took up his shield, much stained by slaughters past,
ornamented with Celtic blood; beneath a dripping cave
a she wolf was depicted there licking the limbs of a child,
as if it were a cub and feeding Trojan Romulus, a god to be[3].
At last he fitted his sword to his side and his spear in his hand.
His charger stands by and fiercely champs his lathering bit,
his saddle the striped skin of a tiger from the Caucasus.
On mounting his horse he drew near now one group and now
another, so far as the cramped space allowed, exhorting them,
"Your task and your glory it is to carry the Carthaginian's head,
impaled, through Rome, a spectacle for mothers and fathers alike.
That single head will pay for all our dead. Let each of you recall
your motivation harsh: I grieve for my brother, lying now upon
Ticinus' bloodied banks, and for my son, without a funeral,
who measures still the length and depth of Eridanus' stream.
Each speak so to himself, but, if there is no private grief
to motivate an individual, then let the common pain
inspire his heart with mighty rage at the ruptured Alps
and the unspeakable fate the people of Saguntum bore,
while those forbidden to cross the Ebro's river stream,
now close upon the Tiber[4]. The augurs procrastinate,
haruspices examine entrails in vain, but Hannibal's
sole task remaining is to pitch his camp upon Tarpeia' s rock."

Just so Flaminius raged, and when he saw in the press of men
a warrior don his helmet of black, "Is yours the task, Orfitus,"
he cried, "to compete for the privilege of carrying the spoils
aloft upon on a bloodstained litter to Jupiter, our willing aid?
For why should this fame be won by another's right hand?"
Then riding on he heard amidst the serried ranks a voice
he recognized, "Your battle cry marks you out from afar,
Murranus," he said, "and I see you that you already rage
in Carthaginian blood. What glory comes! And yet, I beg
of you, carve a way out of these confines with your sword."
Then recognizing Aequanus, a son of Mt. Soracte, unique
in bulk and arms (whose task it was at home, what time
the pious archer[5] takes delights in the blazing mounds, to walk
the harmless fires three times and carry all the offerings)
he cried, "Aequanus, may you ever trace your steps unscathed
upon Apollo's coals and, vanquishing the flames, transport
the customary gifts to prompt Apollo's peaceful smile:
conceive a rage to match your exploits past and wounds.
With you by my side to share my wrath I would not hesitate
to crash the centre of the Marmarid battle line or charge against
the massed horse ranks and squadrons of the Cynphian men."

[3] Silius typically uses the phrase *ingentem Assaraci* – 'mighty son of Assaracus': Assaracus was a legendary king of Troy.
[4] The Ebro was the agreed northern limit of Carthaginian expansion in Spain according to the treaty made at the end of the First Punic War.
[5] The archer is Apollo, pious because he defended his mother Latona by shooting the Python.

No more could Flaminius endure advice and arguments
that stayed the war – a source of longstanding grief for Rome.
Together the deadly trumpets' signal blasts rang out,
the bugle's horrendous tones fragmented the air.
Alas for the pain and tears, so close, though centuries have fled!
I shudder now as if disaster threatened still, and Hannibal
fired troops for war. From concealing forests Asturians
and Libyans poured forth, Balearic warriors too, well armed
with savage slings, a host of Macae, Garamantians and Moors;
then Cantabrians more keen than any race to pledge to war
their hireling swords, content to serve as mercenary troops,
Vascones too who spurned the safety of protective helms.
This side the rocks, that side the lake – here armed men
pressed hard, war cries in unison, and throughout the hills
the Carthaginians roared each to each their battle song.

The gods averted their gaze and gave way unwillingly
to supervening fate. Great Mars himself was amazed
at Hannibal's luck, Venus wept, her hair in total disarray,
Apollo left for Delos' isle to mollify his hurt and grief
with music that he plucked upon his melancholy lyre.
Alone and seated on a peak among the Apennines
did Juno's savage heart anticipate the dreadful massacre.

The cohorts of the Picentes initiated an attack when they saw
the enemy cloudburst[6] break and Hannibal on the charge -
they sought a payment for impending death, their youthful rage
on fire, as they harassed the enemy's quest for victory.
As if their lives were lost already, they freed themselves from fear
and vowed themselves as offerings to soothe their very ghosts.
A cloud of javelins is poured upon the Carthaginian ranks
with collective energy and daring, and so, turned back, they lower
their shields, transfixed with the weight of curvilinear spears.
This provoked the Libyans to keener work – as did the presence
of their savage lord – and, as man encouraged man in turn,
at last chest thrust on chest in the battle's clash and press.

Bellona[7] herself, her hair much bloodied and wild, traversed
the midst of the battlelines and brandished her flaming torch.
The deadly roar that broke from the fatal deity's dark heart
and the hair-raising trumpet's gloomy, funereal blasts
inspired and drove minds now maddened into the fray.
Adversity nurtured the Romans' ire, and as Fortune raged
she cruelly prompted them to think no more of safety's hope,
while clement gods and Victory with her beaming smile
inflamed an enemy that now enjoyed the favour of Mars.

Lateranus, enraptured by a worthy lust for blood and death,
had followed his sword arm, penetrating deep the enemy line.

[6] Duff's term *ad loc.*
[7] The goddess of war.

And after Lateranus, bent on blood and battle, there came
a youth of equal age, one Lentulus, who saw him tempt
fate 'midst the combatants in a battle on unequal terms,
and launched himself in a fierce assault upon harsh Bagas,
whose spear was threatening Lateranus' back in the fight,
but Lentulus' spear was driven home the quicker and
he proved himself an ally in their dire adversity.
Then eagerly the pair united and both their helmets shone
as their heads, erect and proud, displayed twin crests.
Required by chance to face the pair (for who would dare
bear arms against them, unless some deity had destined him
to Stygian night and its inhabitants) one Syrticus
had seized an oaken branch as he ran down from the ridge
and, fiercely brandishing the massive, knotted bough,
he raged with a fruitless passion to slay the two of them.
“Here lie no isles Aegatian, callow youths, nor shores inimical
to sailor men, nor shall the sea disturbed by sudden storms,
without Mars' help grant chance victory; yes, though victors once
at sea, now learn of Africa's martial skills upon dry land,
and learn to yield and abandon your rule to better men!”
At once he attacked Lateranus with the lethal weight
of the ponderous oak, with jibes to match his assault.
And Lentulus gnashed his teeth and raged, “Lake Trasimene
will mount these hills before that branch shall drip
with Lateranus’ pious blood.” Then crouching down he stabbed
the other’s groin, exposed by the man’s assault, and rich the gush
of blood from the black and ruptured lung and gaping guts.

And the frenzy raged no less elsewhere upon the field,
as hand to hand the men sought mutual slaughter. The tall Iertes
slew Nerius. And the noble Volunx, rich in land, was laid
low, Rullus his nemesis – his cloistered treasure chests,
his palace that glowed with native ivory, the villages
he owned alone availed him not at all. What help his property?
That thirst for gold insatiable ‘mongst men? The man that Luck
had blessed just now with wealth amassed, enriched
with opulent gifts, shall the ferryman Charon’s craft
now naked bring to the darkling shores of Tartarus.

Hard by the youthful warrior Appius’ courage cleared the field
with slaughter and, indeed, sought glory where was the need
for valour unconfined, and where no other had the fortitude.
Atlas confronted him, that Atlas from the shores of Spain,
whose far flung home was on the distant ocean’s sandy edge –
no use to him – who lunged at Appius’ face, and his spear’s
fine point then nicked the flesh and tasted a hint of noble blood.
His threats then thundered forth, his furious eyes ignited anew
in flames. His rage and lightning gaze scattered the mass of foes
that blocked his path; the hidden wound beneath his helm
and flowing blood set off his warlike arms to perfection.
Then truly you could see the young man’s dread as he strove
to hide behind his friends, just like the hind that trembles when

pressed hard by the Caspian tigress, or the fearful dove
that folds its wing on seeing a hawk in the clouds above,
or the hare that hides in the briar patch on spotting the wings
of an eagle outstretched in a clear blue sky. Appius slashed his man
in the face with his accelerating blade, then took his head
and quivering hand, and, savage with success, sought other foes.

Isalcas from Cinyps[8] stood by, who had brought his bright
battle-axe to war, poor wretch, had chosen to enter the fight
to win a share of glory before the eyes of Mago[9], his father-in-law
to be. He was proud of his Carthaginian betrothed and of the vain
pledge made that after the war with Rome they should be wed.
Fierce Appius now concentrated his savage rage upon Isalcas,
as he strove to land his weighty axe upon his enemy's brow,
but Appius stood tall and landed his blow on the helm,
but his fragile sword was smashed on the Cynphian' s bronze,
so fierce was the blow. Isalcas' luck was much the same,
as his uncertain strike vainly sheared the boss of his enemy's shield.
Then Appius picked up a rock he never could have raised
had not sore anger granted strength, and panting hard he hurled
the stone, and his enemy fell backwards, and Appius ground
the massive rock upon him, and crushed his shattered bones.
And Mago, involved in combat close by on the field, observed
his son-in-law's fall, and behind his helmet tears poured forth
and he groaned, then charged; the recent marriage settlement
aroused his spirits and all his hopes of grandsons dashed.
And now he was there and gazed upon the warrior's shield
and monstrous limbs of Appius, and the light that shone
from the front of his helmet gave Mago's savage anger pause.
Just as a lion in its headlong dash down from wooded heights,
sinks down on the plain, and gathers his limbs beneath himself,
then sees close by the horns of a truculent bull, and though
longstanding hunger urges him on the lion notes the muscle -
bound lofty neck of the bull, and the eyes that threaten beneath
the curly brows, sees how the bull's demeanour demonstrates
his readiness for battle, scouring the sand with his hooves.
Now Appius hefted his javelin and spoke first in these words,
“If you have any sense of what is right do not desert
your son-in-law, but accompany him!” His swift spear pierced
Mago's shield and brazen armour to penetrate his shoulder.
No verbal answer did he make, but seething levelled his spear,
a memorable gift presented by his mighty brother Hannibal,
which, victorious beneath Saguntum' s walls, he had removed
from Durius' corpse and given to his brother to carry to war,
a noble acknowledged pledge of a famous battle fought and won.
The mighty missile, hurled with all the force of grief to urge
it on, delivered a fatal blow as it penetrated both helm and head.
The warrior's bloodless hands then tried to pull the weapon out,
but fell in vain upon the wound. Upon the Tuscan plain
lies Appius, a famous name, and with him much of Italy's

[8] A town at the mouth of a river in North Africa that goes by the same name.
[9] Mago was one of Hannibal's leading officers.

wreck. Trasimene trembled itself and shrank from the corpse,
withdrew its waves. In his throes of death Appius closed
his bloodied mouth upon the spear and mumbled the shaft.

Nor was Mamercus' fate the better, who payed for his crimes
with all his body, wounded by a multiplicity of fearsome foes.
For he was carrying a standard - gory with its bearer's blood
whom he had killed, and from whom snatched its bulky mass –
through a fearsome band of fighting Lusitanians in his attempts
to rally the wavering eagles of his comrades, unfortunate man!
The troop of outraged Lusitanians, incensed by his arrogance
and boldness both, at one hurled every spear they had to hand
and which the ground, littered thickly and impassable, supplied,
the half of which could find indeed no place to lodge in him,
while those that stuck did strike and pierce his very bones.

Now Hannibal arrives in haste, disturbed, enraged by the wound
his brother had received; and, when he saw his brother's blood,
he frantic asked his brother and his men whether the tip
of the spear that lodged in his side, had struck with full force.
And when he learned there was no risk of death, that the wound
was less than he feared, at once he took his brother in haste
from the battle line, protected by his shield and settled him
in the camp secure from the storm of war. He quickly called
for medical help and that of ancient Synhalus. This man outstripped
all others in anointing a wound with herbal remedies, could charm
a blade from a wound, send snakes to sleep with his caress.
And as a result his reputation was renowned throughout
the cities of Libya and the Egyptian shores of the Syrtes.
Garamantian Ammon himself had gifted long ago the first
Synhalus the knowledge of how to soothe with medication
wild animal bites and the weighty blows of weaponry.
And he next demonstrated as he died the heavenly gift
to his own son, who bequeathed himself his father's arts
in turn to glorify his heir. This heir next followed in line,
his fame no less than that of those before and he with skill
and dedication enlarged Garamantian lore and used to indicate
on many portrait busts his ancestor as Ammon's close companion.
Then, quickly carrying his ancestral remedies in healing hand,
his robes close girt about him, as is the medical way, he cleansed
the wound of blood and soothed the injury by bathing it.
However, Mago, pondering his enemy's death and spoliation
drove out any anxious thoughts from his brother's mind
and with words such as these, made light of a fortunate chance,
“Fear not, my brother,” he said, “you bring no greater relief
to my hurts than this – that Appius lies dead by my spear,
despatched for ever to the spirits below. And even if I lose
my life, I'm satisfied, and will gladly follow my foe to the shades.”

While the Carthaginian leaders were so distracted from the field
and mewed within the camp, from a lofty mound Flaminius saw
his enemy in retreat from the ranks, and Hannibal's black cloud

of war descend upon the plain. And at once Flaminius
with a band of hand picked troops attacked the enemy force
in haste, insane, and his sudden assault alarmed
their thinning ranks. Then in ferocious tones he demands
his horse to charge into the valley central of the fray.
Just so it was when Jupiter hurled his thundering rain
and rattling hail on the land to make it tremble and quake,
and wreathed in cloud the lofty Alps and Ceraunia's summit
with his thunderbolt, when all together the land and sea and sky
and Tartarus itself were shaken in a universal cataclysm.
Flaminius fell upon the foe in this unlooked for attack,
just like an unexpected flood, and cold the dread that chilled
their wretched bones at the sight of the rampant consul's charge.
He launched at their densest point and hacking with his sword
made clear a broad path. The clamour of various different cries
brought the madness of war to the gods and hammered the stars.
Just as when Father Ocean in company with Tethys rages fierce
against the Herculean rock of Calpe[10]and the churning sea
erodes with howling waves the hollowed bowels of the mount,
the rocks give tongue and Tartessus[11] hears the fractured waves
upon the reefs, though far away with continents between,
as Lixus[12] does, though far away with oceans in between.

First Bogus fell, the victim of a javelin that slid deceptively
in silence through the sky, that Bogus who by the fatal stream
of Ticinus had hurled his speeding spear against the men of Rome.
He had thought his life would be long, his brood of grandsons large,
deceived by divinations false derived from the flight of birds.
However, no man may delay by augury the fated final day
that is spun: he fell in the fight while still with bloodied eyes
he looked to heaven, demanding on the very point of death
that the gods redeem their promise made of a long senescence.
Nor was Bagasus allowed to revel and still remain unpunished,
when he took the life of Libo within the consul’s sight.
His ancestors had laurels won in war and the young man's youth
bloomed vigorous. The Massylian sword though took his head,
his beard scarce evident – the barbarian warrior destroyed
his blossoming years of youth with this untimely death.
On the brink of death he called upon Flaminius and did
not call in vain, for at once the enemy's neck was slashed
quite through. It pleased the consul to pay the victor back
in kind and match his brutal mode and replicate the kill.

What deity, o Muses, could give the roll in fitting words of this
compendium of death? Who could produce a worthy panegyric
for such momentous dead? For the young men that fell in a quest
for glory, for harsh deeds done by grown men at death's door,
for berserk rage in a heart that is pierced already with spears?

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[10] Calpe was Gibraltar, one of the Pillars of Hercules.
[11] Tartessus is thought to be a town on the west coast of Spain and so the extremist western land from Rome.
[12] According to Duff *ad loc.* the name of a river and town in Morocco.

There was no time to think of plunder or looting a corpse.
The lust for slaughter urged them on, while his brother's wound
kept Hannibal detained in the closed off camp and Flaminius
rained mayhem with javelin and sword among the host,
distinctive on his horse, or making now ferocious war
on foot before the eagles and flags. The impious valley floor
ran red with rivers of blood, and the hills and cavernous rocks
re-echoed the clangour of arms and the snorting of horse.

Marmarican Othrys confounded the battle field
as he brought a more than human strength to the fray,
and at the sight of his gigantic stature and presence
the craven Romans turned and fled. Broad shoulders held
his mighty head aloft above the rank and file of either side,
a shock of shaggy hair did shade his grim visage and a beard
to match his hair concealed his gaping open mouth
in shade. His body hair bristled in horrendous filth, and so
a wild and hirsute matted pelt concealed his unkempt chest.
No single man did dare approach to fight at closer quarters
with the warrior: like a beast at large upon the open plain
he was assailed with missiles thrown unpunished from afar,
until at last as he charged the shattered Roman rear, his face
enraged, when a silent Cretan arrow flew through the air
to pierce with its shaft his threatening eye and stopped
the man's advance. And as he turned to retreat to the ranks,
Flaminius hurled a spear which pierced his unprotected ribs
from the back to show its point thrust through his front
and shaggy chest. At once he strove to pull the weapon out
when he saw the javelin's point of shining steel emerge,
until, his life blood gushing forth in moist abundance,
he massive fell and died, his wound embracing the spear.
His final breath in exhalation stirred the dust to motion on
the nearby plain, dispersing its cloud to the breeze and sky.

No less bitter was the fighting that raged among the hills and trees,
scattered midst the rocks and thickets which glistened and dripped
with gore from the various fights fought over the broken ground.
A cause of death and bitter destruction to men anxious in flight
was Sychaeus. With his spear from long range he struck through
and felled Murranus, a man unmatched in times of peace
at plucking dulcet tones from Thracian Orpheus's lyrical strings.
He fell in the mighty woods and even at death's door recalled
his native mountains, and Aequan hills, delighting in vines,
Sorrentum too, its airs made soft by the healthful Zephyr's breeze.
Sychaeus made a companion then for Murranus in death, rejoicing
as victor at the brutal novelty of this savage engagement.
For while in pursuit of the stragglers Tauranus had penetrated deep
into the woods and, leaning against the trunk of an ancient elm,
attempted so to protect his back from attack and called
upon the remnant of his companions in desperate tones – in vain,
for Sychaeus transfixed the young man with his spear that plunged
through his limbs to stick fast in the tree that blocked its flight.

What overwhelmed you, warriors, the wrath of gods, or cowardice,
your minds distrait, when, abandoning the battle, you sought
assistance from the trees? In times of desperation fear is shown
quite clearly to be a faulty counsellor: the dreadful outcome
of that ugly death is positive proof of terror's poor advice.
An ancient oak there stretched its topmost branches to the sky,
its shady head amongst the clouds above the forest's canopy -
an image in itself had it stood upon an open plain of some
great copse – which covered the ground beneath the leafy grove
with darkling shadows cast far and wide by the lowering oak.
Hard by an oak of equal stature had striven over centuries
to thrust its high and ancient head towards the stars,
which spread atop its massive girth a mass of leaves,
which shaded with their foliage the peaks upon the summit ridge.
A troop of men from Henna hither came at speed, whom your
king, Arethusa[13], had despatched, men unaware of how to die
with dignity, their minds become unhinged by a surfeit of fear,
so each in turn now climbed the tree in haste and pressed
their shifting weight upon the branches which made them sway.
Now one and now another fought to find a place to stand
in safety, and so some fell to the ground (undone by the rot
in the ancient boughs, misplacing their trust in the antique tree)
while others fearful hung as sitting targets 'mongst the boughs.
In his eager haste to destroy them all with a similar fate
Sychaeus then laid down his shield and changed his choice
of weaponry, and seized at once his brazen battle axe.
And willing hands arrive and with an awful groan that tree
cries out, succumbing now to the hail of blows delivered.
As the trunk is struck the wretched mob swings to and fro,
as when the west wind batters an ancient groves of trees
and the birds can scarcely cling to the trembling tops,
but are tossed about along with their eyries and nests.
However, at last the unwelcoming oak succumbed and fell
to the flurry of blows, and proved a sad retreat for the men
whose limbs she crushed in her comprehensive collapse.

Disaster's aspect was varied indeed. Another oak hard by
the slaughter there caught fire of a sudden, wrapped in flames.
And now among the foliage the savage tortured blasts
of Vulcan's[14] fire raced feverish along the arid boughs
to scorch the tops with greedy blasts of all consuming fire.
Nor did the shooting cease meanwhile. And bodies half
consumed by fire embraced the blazing branches as they fell.

Amongst these wretched sufferings of men at war, behold!
Flaminius arrives, Sychaeus' death and vengeance on his mind.
The youngster, conscious of the risk of such a confrontation,
was the first to make a trial of the issue with his spear,

[13] The king in question was Hiero the Second, an ally of Rome. In a manner typical of Silius Arethusa, a fountain in Syracuse is intended to refer to Syracuse as a whole.
[14] As Mars is used to personify war, so Vulcan personifies fire.

but its point lodged but lightly in the bronze spear's boss,
was not allowed to penetrate the barrier of wicker-work.
The consul, not prepared to trust the chance of a death
desired to the cast of a spear, he buried his sword in his side,
running through his coarse leathern shield quite unchecked.
The unfortunate slips to the ground and in the throes of death
bites dirt with bloody mouth. Then as the chill poured through
his limbs, and he welcomed death's invasion of his inner self,
he closed his eyes tight shut in the everlasting sleep of death.

And while the battle raged with alternating fortunes and scenes
of horror such as these, Hannibal and Mago both had left
the camp behind, and pressed on with their troops at speed,
a forced march, and were eager to make up the time lost
in killing Roman warriors and repay a debt of bloodshed owed.
Their mass of troops pressed on and raised a cloud of black
and swirling dust, and the sand and soil of the plain flies high;
and wherever Hannibal makes his way and shapes his path,
about him the storm of war roils, driven by shifting squalls,
to hide the lofty mountains in concealing darkness there.
Fontanus fell pierced through the thigh, then Buta through
his minstrel throat, and emerging from the wound the spear
surveyed his back: the one, a man of lineage long, was grieved
by sad Fregellae, then Buta's alma mater wept, Anagnia[15].
Laevinus, your fate was much the same, although your bravery
was not; you do not dare confront the Carthaginian general
himself, but choose as equal combatant, one Ithemon, a chief
among Moroccan men, and while he looted his hamstrung prey
a mighty ash-wood spear crashed through his ribs, its force
unstoppable, as his limbs collapsed beneath the sudden blow
and he sprawled himself across his enemy's prostrate corpse.

Nor did Sidicina's[16] warriors hang back. Virasius led a troop
of one thousand men at arms, a man unrivalled in pitching camp,
or fashioning a raft, at levelling a city's walls with the ram
so tough, in setting in place siege works against an enemy tower.
And after Hannibal saw him delighting in his savage manliness –
Arauricus, mistrustful of his lighter armour, had, wounded, fled
headlong – the Carthaginian, made by this the fiercer now, his rage
inflamed by glorious Mars, and deeming himself worthy to close
and fight this savage warrior, flew at him, as from the corpse
Virasius retrieved his javelin, and, struck him in the breast,
then Hannibal declared, "Your handiwork is deserving of praise,
whoever you are – and worthy to die a victim of my right hand.
Carry down to the shades a glorious death! Had not you been
Italian by birth, you might have left with the gift of life."
He sought next to fight with Fadus, and then the veteran Labicus,
whom Hamilcar once had fought upon the shores of Sicily[17],

[15] Fregellae was a Volscian town, while Anagnia was the major town of the Hernici: both settlements were close to Rome.
[16] A town in Campania.
[17] During the First Punic War.

and gifted him fair fame from that remarkable encounter.
Forgetful of his age and elder years the veteran advanced
to battle, his mind still young and his passions very fresh,
but his feeble blows betrayed his brittle strength in war's
harsh crucible - just so a straw fed fire will roar to no effect
at all, producing a feeble flame devoid of destructive force.
When Hannibal learned his name from his father's squire,
he proudly declared, "Now, pay the price for that first fight."
Then added, "Noble Hamilcar will use my own right hand
to drag you down to Hell!" Then aiming from his ear he hurled
his javelin, and ran the veteran through and he thrashed about
impaled. When Hannibal withdrew his spear the gush of blood
defiled his hoary locks and closed his long travails in death.
Likewise he slew Herminius in his first battle, a man who used,
Lake Trasimene, to draw your fish from the very depths for food
to feed his ancient sire, his predatory hooks within the lake
itself, and his tensile line stretched over the waters still.

Meanwhile his sad companions carried Sychaeus' lifeless corpse
upon his shield and brought the dead Carthaginian back to camp.
When Hannibal espied their lachrymose advance and haste,
he was suddenly struck to the heart with a presentiment of grief
and said, "Why this lamentation, friends? Who has been torn away
by angry gods? Has one dark day, Sychaeus, and an untimely death
now taken you, abetted by your fearsome lust for pleasing praise
and your excess of passion to taste your first time battle's fruits?"
The pallbearers gave a tearful response to Hannibal's lament
and matching his pain, revealed the name of Sychaeus' nemesis.
"I see," said Hannibal, 'the glorious wound in your chest, the gift
of a Roman spear. You will go to Hades worthy of Carthage
and Hasdrubal both. Your best of mothers will mourn for you
as a match for your forebears, and then, in the Stygian shade,
my sire Hamilcar will not despise you as not worthy of the line.
Flaminius, though, the cause of my deep and wretched grief,
shall with his death reduce my pain, shall escort your corpse
to the grave, and impious Rome too late shall wish she had
not stolen my dear Sychaeus' life away with deadly stroke."

While speaking so his breath steams tortured from his mouth
and his anger forces from his breast a gasp quite inarticulate,
as when a liquid, superheated, seethes with passionate waves,
confined and enraged inside its red-hot cauldron's bronze.
Then hurling himself headlong to the battle's midst he sought
Flaminius alone, insulting him. And he as quick as thought
was set for war and Mars himself began to rouse himself
ever closer to hand, as each man took his stand upon the field,
and then a sudden crash along the crags, the very hills
were shaken dreadfully, the topmost peaks upon the ridge
vibrate. The forests swayed upon the pine clad slopes,
and fractured rocks did avalanche upon the troops below.
The depths of earth then roared within their broken caves
and sprang apart, creating mighty fissures in the land,

and gaping wide the spreading maw revealed the dead
through cavernous jaws. The deepest shades were terrified
by the long lost light. The black lake's water lifted high
to the hills and, driven far from its ancestral floor,
then bathed the Tuscan woods in unaccustomed floods.
And that same cataclysmic, dreadful tragedy laid waste
and washed away the towns, the peoples of great kings.
As well the rivers' streams flowed hard against their springs,
the sea retreated from the shore and abandoning the Apennines,
which were their home, the Fauns now fled to the shore.

Yet, such the madness of war, the men continued to fight,
unbalanced on the heaving ground, and, falling as the earth
gave way beneath, still hurled their vagrant spears at the foe,
until the Romans turned their errant, driven course towards
the lake's shore, indecisive and herded into the shallows there.
The consul, separated from these men because of the 'quake,
upbraided them now from the rear, "What lies in store, I pray,
for men who run? You lead our enemy to the walls of Rome,
give gifts of fire and steel for use against the shrine of Jupiter
upon Tarpeia's rock. Stand firm, my men, and learn from me
the savage art of war, or, if that lesson is too difficult to learn,
then learn to die! Flaminius shall show the worthy way to men
as yet unborn, and so no man of Libya nor Spaniard will ever look
upon a consul's back. If such a craving and passion for flight
consumes you, then I, alone, shall take each and every javelin
in the chest and, as I die and as my failing soul flies through
the air, I shall summon back your sword arms to the battle line."

And while Flaminius spoke so, plunging deep into the fray,
Ducarius neared, savage of aspect and intent. This fierce
man's name was known in his tribe, while in his barbarian heart
he nursed an ancient hurt of when his ancestors of the Boii once
were put to flight: and when he saw and recognized the proud
and victorious face of Flaminius, "Were you," he said, 'the cause
of all our greatest fears? Pray, let me with this weapon test
if blood will flow from a wound in such a mighty hero made!
And do not be ashamed, my countrymen, to send his head
as a sacrifice to our heroic dead: for standing in his chariot,
triumphant, he drove our vanquished fathers to the Capitol.
The hour of vengeance calls!" Then equally from all sides
Flaminius was overcome with missiles. This storm cloud cleft
the air, and Ducarius, under covering fire, ensured no other man
could claim the credit for the consul's death. Flaminius dead,
the battle ceased. In close order then the young leaders of
the Roman force, enraged at the gods and at their own
incompetence for failure in the risks of war, and, convinced
that the sight of Carthage as victor was worse than death itself,
now swiftly spread across Flaminius' corpse and limbs,
spreadeagled in the mighty struggle, their own bodies and arms,
hands bloodied in a battle lost. And so they wove for him
a tomb of close knit death. There was carnage in the lake

and scattered in the woods and in the valley deep in blood,
when Hannibal and his brother rode into the killing ground
where the young men had died, and, “Do you see these wounds,
these deaths?” he asked, “Each man’s hand grasps still his sword,
each soldier lies dead in his armour, maintaining the fight!
Let our own troops observe the manner of these deaths!
The threatening frowns remain, rage stands still on their face!
I am afraid this fecund land, so blessed with fruitfulness
to bring to birth such heroes, is marked down by the fates
for empire, shall conquer the world by dint of defeats.”
He spoke and surrendered to night, the advent of which,
the loss of the sun, the gathering dark put and end to the deaths.

Punica: Book 6

Silius Italicus

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Book 6

The aftermath of the battle. The Romans flee (1 – 61). Regulus' son Serranus flees: he takes refuge at the home of Marus, one of his father's officers in Africa, who dresses his wounds (62 – 100), and retells the story of Regulus (101 – 551).
Rome mourns the defeat at Trasimene. Serranus returns home to his mother Marcia (552 – 589). The Senate discusses various plans of action. Jupiter stops Hannibal from marching against Rome. Q. Fabius is appointed Dictator (590 – 618), who demonstrates great wisdom (619 – 640). Hannibal marches through Picenum and Umbria to Campania: on seeing pictures of the First Punic War on the temple walls at Liternum he orders them burnt (641 – 716).

And now on Eastern shores the Titan sun was harnessing the steeds
he had released in the farthest West, what time he melted into night,
and men of China – the first illumined by the rising sun – began
to pluck once more a silken harvest from their wool bearing trees[1],
and then dreadful slaughter met the gaze, while the work of Mars,
insane, was clearly seen: at once both weaponry and warriors
and horse, the warriors' strong right hands stuck still in the wounds
of fallen foes; shields strewn at random lay and helmet plumes,
decapitated dead and swords broken and smashed on tough,
resistant bone, while one could also see the eyes of men
half dead that were seeking out in vain a tiny glimpse of sky.
And there the lake that roiled with blood, and corpses afloat
on the top of the tide, bereft forever of any tomb or grave.

And yet adversity had not yet broken the spirit of Rome.
One Bruttius, whose wounds betrayed a mismatched fight,
scarce lifted his head from a massive heap of wretched dead,
but dragged his maimed and mutilated limbs with a strength
that failed from time to time across the bloodied butchery.
Of humble means and birth and eloquence, his sword at least
was sharp and none other of the Volscian folk won greater fame
from a noble death. With the bloom of youth upon his cheeks,
but still a boy he had chosen to join the military camp, was seen
by fierce Flaminius when he, the gods more helpful then,
had utterly crushed the Celtic hordes in war and victory.
Then honour and guardianship of the sacred eagle in time
of war, which glorious office guaranteed his death at last.
An inevitable death, indeed, and when he could not stop
the capture of the eagle, and after he had seen their luck
begin to fail and the battle on catastrophe's utter brink,
he made to hide the standard, entrusting it to the ground,
but stricken by a sudden spear he spread his failing limbs
across the standard, to hide the eagle beneath his corpse.
When day returned from a Stygian night of wretched sleep,
he stood erect, his weight on a spear from a nearby corpse,
and, expending his strength in one final attempt, he dug
in the earth with his sword, the earth that parted easily,

[1] The Romans believed that the Chinese harvested silk as a vegetable product from trees.

so soaked it was far and wide in blood, then bowing before
the luckless effigy he smoothed the sands with palsied hands.
Then the final breath of a man exhausted made its way
through the tenuous airs to send one more heroic soul to hell.

Hard by one might see the sacrosanct extreme of bravery,
well worthy of the poet's verse. Laevinus, of Privernum
in the hills of Latium, had earned the honour of the rattan cane[2].
He lifeless lay upon the lifeless Tyres, a man of Nasimonia.
Laevinus had neither sword nor spear, both lost in the fortune
of the hand to hand. Yet hand to hand, unarmed, his despair
had found a tool for war: he fought with bloodied jaws
and his raging teeth stood in for steel. Already Tyres' nose
was torn away, his eyes were ravaged and chewed,
his head was mangled, reft of ears, its forehead gnawed
in dreadful ways - Laevinus' mouth was filled with blood,
unsated though until life's breath escaped those champing jaws
and the darkness of death took full possession of his limbs.

While virtue's grim face showcased such wondrous events,
meantime the fugitives, a mob of desperate men, enjoyed
a varied fate, blundering blindly through the pathless woods,
all wounded and making their furtive way through the night
and deserted countryside. Each sound and every breeze
affrighted them, the rustle of a roosting bird's light wing.
No sleep nor peace of mind. Fierce Mago harried them, now
quite stunned, relentless Hannibal in turn with bitter spear.

Serranus, your son, Regulus, bore an illustrious name,
whose father's fame increases ever with passing time,
remembered for keeping faith with faithless Carthaginians.
Serranus, though, in the bloom of youth had begun to war
with Carthage, but cursed with his father's luck and badly hurt,
desired to return to his poor mother and the household gods
he loved so well. There was no one to keep him company,
nor tend his critical wounds. Now, leaning on a broken spear,
and saved from capture by the darkness of night, he made
his trackless, stealthy way to the pastures of Perugia.
Exhausted and resigned to whatever fate might bring,
he knocked on the door of a modest shelter. Marus at once
unfolded from his bed (a veteran he of Regulus' day,
had fought in his war, gaining a name not unknown to fame)
and approached with a taper carried before him and lit
from Vesta's humble hearth. When he recognized the youth,
and saw his wounds' severity and observed his faltering steps,
dependent on a broken spear – a pitiful sight to see –
his ears were already beset by word of the dread calamity,
"What injustice do I see? I have lived too long, was born

[2] See Duff, *ad loc.* 'Each centurion carried a rattan made of vine-wood and applied it to the backs of soldiers who were negligent in performing heir military duties.' Accordingly one can assume that Laevinus was a centurion.

to bear too many woes! I saw you, the greatest general,
lord Regulus, when your captive face struck terror in the heart
of Carthage, and – a cause of shame and blame to Jupiter -
I saw you die and drank a draught of pain, which the fall
of Carthage itself could not drive out from my heart.
And so, where are you gods? A Regulus proffers his breast
to the sword, and perfidious Carthage cuts off the rising son
of that great house!" And then he laid the sick man's limbs
upon his couch; no tyro in the art of medicine, the which
he had learned in time of war, he cleaned and bathed
the wounds and soothed them with salves, binding them
with wool, so soft to the touch, and eased the fevered limbs.
The veteran's next concern was to ease the weary man's
sad thirst and restore his flagging strength with a modest meal.
When this was quickly done, at length sleep ministered its
own gifts and infused the victim's limbs with restful quietude.
Before the dawn of the day the faithful Marus, forgetful of
his age, was intent on treating the heat of the wound
with trusted remedies, and providing a pleasing chill.

The young Serranus raised his mournful face to the stars
and wept and sighed in unison, "Father Jupiter, if you do
not hate Tarpeia' s citadel, have not as yet condemned
Quirinus' rule, view Italy *in extremis* now and Rome
on disaster's brink," he said, "and turn a sunnier gaze
upon our storms. We have lost the Alps, nor is a limit set
to our adversity: the Ticinus, the Po run black with the blood
of Rome, and you, Trebia, are made notorious now
by Punic victory, as is the Arno's most lachrymose land.
Why tell of these? Behold a weight of disaster heavier far!
I saw the level of Lake Trasimene raised by the numbers slain
and the mass of fallen dead. I saw Flaminius fall amidst a hail
of javelins. I swear, by my father's reverent shade, that I
sought death by killing enemies, a death to match my sire's
nobility in death, had not harsh fate denied me such an end,
as once it had denied my father Regulus the end he craved."

The old man laboured hard to comfort him, as more and more
the youngster grieved, and said, "Adopt your father's ways,
brave youth, endure your present woes - let us bear what comes!
The gods dictate that the wheel of fortune runs headlong
on life's steep path through hazards that unpredictable;
The history of your house is filled with deeds of greatness,
noised through the world: your father was a hallowed personage,
a match for gods, his lofty reputation gained by his confrontation
of adverse circumstance, a man who maintained a virtuous life,
until his soul and spirit abandoned his unwilling limbs.
I had scarce myself grown through the years of youth
when maturity's first signs did shade the cheeks of Regulus.
I became his comrade and comrades we remained for years,
until it seemed good to the gods to quench the leading light

of Rome, in the noble breast of whom kind Loyalty had made
her seat and embraced and held onto his heart as home.
He presented me with this sword as a mark of great respect
for my courage in battle displayed, and this bridle, black
with smoke, as you see, though the silver still gleams thereon.
No cavalryman could equal Marus when he had received
such gifts. However, my lance outstripped each and every one
of my honours. You see me pour a libation of wine to honour it.
It is worth your while to learn the worthy reason why…

The sluggish River Bagrada ploughs its turbid furrow through
parched sands, and in all of Libya's bounds no other stream
can match the width of its muddy waters' flood and flow,
can cover the spreading plains with standing waters so.
Here keen to find a water supply in which the land was poor
we gladly camped along the river's side in that unfriendly place.
Close by there was an airless, Stygian sunless grove of trees,
a place for pallid shades from which exhaled a noisome stench,
a thick miasmic breath erupting through the foetid airs.
Within there was a dreadful dwelling place, a massive cave
beneath the earth with gloomy shadows quite bereft of light.
My mind recalls the dread. A deadly monster, born of the wrath
of Earth, the like of which scarce any age of men will see
again, a serpent, whose total length extended fifty yards,
inhabited that fatal river bank and those Avernian[3] groves.
It filled its vast belly's maw and sated its heavy toxic gut
with lions taken, that slaked their thirst at the waterhole,
or with cattle beasts driven down to the river in the heat
of the blistering sun, or on birds overcome by noxious gas,
and dragged down from the sky. The ground was strewn
with mutton bones, half eaten, belched forth in the dark
of its cave, his ugly meal of decimated flocks complete.
And when its fiery food had fired the gut, it used to cool
itself in the swift flowing stream and foaming river's waves,
and while still its total body mass was not as yet submerged,
its head was already at rest on the edge of the opposite bank.
Quite unaware of such a threat I made my way, accompanied
by Aquinus from the Apennines, and Avens, a man of Umbria.
It took our fancy to explore the grove, to check its seeming calm.
As we approached a silent dread did penetrate our joints,
our limbs grew rigid and stiff with a mysterious chill.
And yet we entered, and prayed to the Nymphs and god
of the unknown stream, and dared entrust our fearful steps -
in spite of many a fear – to the recess of the secret grove.
At once, erupting from the threshold and mouth of the cave,
a Tartarean whirlwind blasted forth, more savage than
an Eastern gale, and a tempest arose from that vast maw,
a tempest that blended its own tortured wail with the howls
of Cerberus. This portent filled us with dread as we stared

[3] Avernus was a lake near Puteoli believed to be an entrance to the underworld. The foul air was thought to suffocate birds flying over the surface of the lake, as here in vv. 158f.

at each other: sounds emerged from the earth which stirred
itself, the cave crashed ruinous, and we felt the dead emerge.
As large as the snakes that armed the Giants in their assault
on Olympus, as the beast that wearied Amphitryon's son[4]
in Lerna's watery swamp, as big as Juno's worm that kept
its watch upon the Golden Apples in the garden of Hesperides,
so huge a monster now raised its glittering head to the stars
from the ruptured earth, to share its spittle with the clouds
at the first, and contaminate the heavens with open jaws.
We fled, breathless with fear, and tried to raise a feeble cry –
in vain! The monster's sibilant sounds of hissing filled
the grove entirely. Blinded now by a sudden dread Avens
condemned himself by a foolish act (though forced by fate)
and hid himself in the mighty trunk of an ancient oak,
to see if he could escape the monstrous serpent there.
I scarce believed it! The beast tore out the tall tree's trunk
entirely from the earth with its gigantic coils and turned
it bodily upside down, its deepest roots ripped out,
caught Avens as he fell and called at the last in terror
on his friends, then sucking him into those terrible jaws
(I saw this as I fled) it engrossed him into its noisome gut.
Aquinus, unluckily, had entrusted himself to the stream
and its rushing waters, swimming swiftly away in flight,
but the beast attacked in mid-stream and taking him
to the banks there feasted on him, a dreadful way to die.
Fate granted then that I escape that monster dread
and dire. I hastened on my way as fast as trauma allowed
that I might reveal each detail to Regulus, the general,
who cried in pity for the bitter plight of those poor youths.
As ever ardent for the fray and war and battles 'gainst
the enemy, and burning with desire for daring deeds.
At once he ordered his men to arms and cavalry to take
the field, a force well tested in war. Himself at the charge
he spurred his swift horse onward, followed in haste at his
command by shield bearing troops who brought up siege
machinery, catapults and engines that fire huge shafts,
whose armoured points bring down tall towers.
The horse then thundered round that fearful, fatal place
with pounding hooves of horn upon the grassy plain,
and, neighing, roused the snake which slid from its lair
to breathe a Stygian blast of heat from smoking jaws.
From both its eyes flashed flames of dreadful fire; erect
its upright crest loomed, towering above the tall tree-tops;
triple forked its flickering tongue pulsated through the air,
reached high to besiege, assault and lick the very sky,
but when the trumpets sounded then, alarmed, the snake
uplifted high its monstrous weight and, settling on its rear,
amassed beneath its front its body of coils entwined.
At once it launched an attack, at speed unwinding its coils

[4] Hercules fought and killed the Hydra as one his Labours in the swamp of Lerna.

convoluted, extending its whole body's length at full
stretch, covering the space to the distant horse in a flash,
arriving face to face; the horses then all snorted in fear
of the snake, refused to pay any heed to the reins or bit
and blew through their nostrils dense steaming clouds.
It shook its head, uplifted on high, both this way and that,
supported on its swollen coils, then snatched in its rage
the fearful men aloft, now took delight in crushing them
pressed under its bulk and, their bones broken, it gluts
on black blood, jaws soaked, dripping with gore, agape,
in search of further prey it abandons a part eaten corpse.
And now the troops fell back, and the victorious beast
harassed the squadrons from afar with its noisome breath,
until the general recalled them to the battle and urged
them on, declaring, “Shall Italy's youth show its backs
to this beast, and confess that Rome is far outmatched
by a Libyan snake? If its breath has unmanned you quite,
and your bold spirit vanished at the sight of his jaws,
I shall charge on my own and deal to this monstrous thing
alone.” Such his shouted challenge and showing no fear
he launched his flying spear from his thunderbolt arm.
The spear's point pierced the monster's brow to good
effect, its impact aided by the frenzied beast's momentum,
so that it lodged and quivered in that serpentine skull.
A cry struck the stars, and its sudden and constant howls
reached heaven's doors. And then the earth-born beast
in earnest raged, impatient of flight, a stranger to pain:
had never in its long life felt the bite of steel before.
Nor would its rapid charge have failed, spurred on
by pain, had not Regulus' fine riding skills helped him elude
the threatening beast on his whirling steed, and when,
the beast with a supple twist of its back pursued the horse
again in its turn, he swiftly hauled back the left rein to escape.
But Marus was no mere idle spectator of these events,
his right hand at rest. My shaft was the second to pierce
the monster's hide. And now the thrice forked tongue
was lapping again at the foundering rump of the general's
mount. I flung my spear and swiftly turned the beast's
assault and fierce attention onto myself in his stead.
The troops then eagerly followed my lead and hurled
their spears, and turned the angry beast on each of them
in turn, until a catapult lowered the beast like a city wall.
And then indeed its might was broken, its weakened spine
now lacking its customary strength in fending off assault,
unable more to lift its head to the clouds. We pressed
the harder then and soon a mighty missile struck deep
in its gut and flights of arrows stole the light from its eyes.
Now from its open jaws and that cavernous open wound
flowed sputum, toxic, corrosive, but at last its tail was fixed
to the ground by a hail of darts and a mass of heavy beams
to weigh it down; and still its feeble jaws make feeble threats,

until a massive thunderous beam was launched with a roar
and crushed its head – and so its rampart of a corpse was laid
along the river's banks and fouled the air with a livid cloud
of noxious gas, escaping at the last from its dreadful maw.
There erupted then a mournful bellow from the river's stream,
reverberating through the depths; and suddenly too the grove,
the cave and river banks howled tearful counterpoint to the trees.
And soon we paid huge penalties to compensate for this sad victory!
Such sufferings when we had to drink the cup of retribution dry!
Nor were our holy prophets silent when they warned with threats
of future perils that we had laid vile hands upon the Naiads' slave,
the Naiads Bagrada sustains in his lukewarm river's stream.
This spear was the prize your father gave to honour me, Serranus,
a prize in honour of the second wound I dealt, but this was his own,
the shaft that had tasted first the blood of that sacred beast."

By now Serranus' face and eyes were wet with floods of tears,
as he spoke and broke into the midst of the warrior's tale,
"Had Regulus' life been spared and had endured to our day,
neither Trebia would have overflowed its fatal banks with blood
nor Trasimene have drowned so many of our noble warriors."

Responding then the veteran, "Carthage paid a heavy price
in blood, he said, "and holy requital made for Regulus' death.
For Africa's manpower had so been thinned and her wealth
eroded she offered her hands in supplication, when brave
Therapne[5] on an ill starred day sent a general[6] to Carthage.
A man of no particular grace, he lacked any noble brow,
but what he lost in stature he made up in startling energy;
he was quick of limb, with a strength to conquer larger men.
In waging a war that combined swordsmanship and strategy,
in enduring harsh conditions and living off the harshest land,
he was a match at least for yonder Hannibal, who nowadays
holds the palm. I wish that Taygetos, so hostile to Rome,
had alone not toughened him upon the shady river banks
of Eurotas! I would then have seen the walls that Dido built
collapse in flames[7], would not have wept for the horrid fate
of Regulus, the grieving memory of which I shall keep and take
to Tartarus, quite impervious to death and the funeral's pyre.
The forces met upon the battlefield, Mars was rife and raved
throughout the land, and no man's heart was free from rage.
Here Regulus, wielding his sword in the midst of his troops,
performed remarkable deeds, cut swathes across the plain,
rushed into danger, his hand dealing death with each blow.
As when hurricane southerlies scream and whip along
dark clouds, and from a pitch black and impending sky
makes threat of equal ruin for both land and sea,
then both farmer and shepherd on the wooded heights

[5] Sparta.
[6] Xanthippus.
[7] The walls of Carthage.

all shake with fear, while the sailor reefs his sails in dread.
The Spartan general though devised a trick and hid
some troops in hollow rock formations, then suddenly
turned tail in a hasty retreat and in simulated fear.
Just so the shepherd caring for his sheep in their stalls
at night seduces the wolf with the cries of a tethered lamb
to fall into a trap lightly covered with deceptive greenery.
Ambition that fires the noble heart seduced the general,
as did a misplaced trust in the fickle heart of Mars.
He thrust himself forward spurred on by a wild desire
for battle, alone, not looking back to his companions,
or his followers' arms, when a swarm of Spartan troops
emerged of a sudden from their rocky hiding place,
and surrounded Regulus. Behind appeared a host of savages.
A dreadful day for Rome, marked down as such forever!
A day to shame you, Mars! A hero born to serve both you
and Rome endured the captive's shameful fate in chains.
A source of constant sorrow for me… A Carthaginian cell
looked down on Regulus. Carthage, did the gods account
you worthy of so great a victory? What penalty will the men
of Sparta pay, polluted so by war crimes such as this.
But now the Punic elders gave to Regulus, under oath,
fresh treaty terms and sent him home to sue for peace,
demanding that their own prisoners of war be freed
as a ransom for their own Roman general's safe return.
At once a ship stood by and rode at anchor at the water's edge,
launched from the naval yards, while the sailors shaped
their oars in the woods, felled pines to make cross beams
for the crew; others fitted out the rigging with twisted ropes,
still others' task it was to fit the sail upon the upright mast.
The anchor's weight and iron flukes were laid upon the prow.
A master mariner and steersman of the ship one Cothon fit
the rudder at the stern. The shining brass of the triple beak
gleamed shimmering and reflected bright upon the deep.
They brought aboard their weapons and a wealth of gear
to meet the timely needs of a ship at sea. Athwart the poop

the coxswain stands, who regulates the oarsmen's stroke,
and sets the timing of the oars, hauled back in unison,
so that their blades in rhythm can beat the echoing seas.
When the sailors' work was done and the hour to sail had come
the ship all fitted out, and the winds stood fair for Rome,
the whole population, mothers, boys, old men rushed out
as Fortune dragged the general through the throng before
its hostile gaze, a spectacle. His gaze was firmly to the front,
unmoved, and as calm as when, first of all as admiral,
he had brought his fleet to land on Carthaginian soil.
I went with him – and he did not demur – and embarked
in sadness on the ship to share as friend in his distress.
To strive against hard circumstance, poor clothes, foul food,
hard beds, he thought outdid a conquered enemy, refused

to flee hardships through caution, but rather as a mark
of honour preferred endurance and to overcome them.
One hope I cherished still (although I knew his stern sense
of duty then, had known it long before), the hope that if
we were allowed to reach the walls of Rome, our home,
his warrior's heart might melted be by your childish tears.
I kept my fears to myself and began to think that Regulus
was capable of tears, his mind susceptible to grief like mine.
When finally we glided into the home waters of Tiber's stream,
I observed the general's face and the eyes that betray intent
and maintained this same watching brief persistently.
Believe me when I say, my boy, I never saw him change
his expression even once, not suffering a host of grief,
not in his native Rome, nor in the cruel town of Agenor[8],
nor when I saw him suffer the punitive pains of torture there.
At once there came a multitude from all the towns of Italy
to meet the prisoner and, when its mass defeated the plain,
it filled the hills and Tiber's high banks were filled with noise.
The Carthaginian leaders themselves strove to persuade
his stubborn heart to resume his ancestral garb, a toga's pomp
was offered him. He stood stock still, while senators wept,
as well the crowd of married women and young men grieved,
immobile he amidst the tears; a consul proffered his hand
from in the crowd to celebrate the prodigal's return to step
once more upon his native land, but he withdrew, advised
the consul to do the same and respect his office's dignity.
Surrounded by his arrogant crowd of captors and his fellow
prisoners he walked, a source of shame to the heavenly gods.
See, Marcia came with her two sons in train, a proof of love;
distressed by her great husband's too much virtue shown,
she tore her clothes and unkempt hair in her despair.
(Do you recall that day, Serranus? Perhaps your memory fails…)
And she, when she saw him close by, unsightly in his Punic garb,
with loud laments outpoured collapsed in a sickly faint
and slid to the ground, the chilly pallor of death upon her limbs.
If the gods have any sense of what is right at all, let Carthage see
such mothers, wives as Marcia. Then Regulus addressed me,
his voice quite calm and ordered me to fend off your joint embrace,
your mother's too; he closed himself off to the power of grief
completely, and never bowed his head in the face of pain."

Then Serranus groaned deeply and spoke through his tears,
and said, "Mighty father, revered by me no less than the deity
that dwells upon Tarpeia' s citadel, if a man is granted the right
of pious lament, then why did you deny this solace to mother
and me, harsh soul, deny the honour too of laying our hands
upon your sacred face, the honour of accepting kisses from
your mouth? Was it not right to clasp your good right hand
in mine? How much more lightly would I bear these wounds,

[8] Carthage is meant. Agenor, father of Cadmus was a king of the Phoenicians and so an ancestor of the Carthaginians.

if I were granted the right to take to hell the certain memory
of your embrace, august sire! But unless, Marus, memory fails
me - for we were so very young at the time of these events -
his appearance was much more than human; dishevelled hair
fell down from his hoary head to cover massive shoulders, on
his brow, beneath the squalid hair, there sat a dreadful beauty,
and all the imprinted weight of a revered and noble soul.
No similar sight has struck my eyes since.' Then Marus boke in,
preventing him from aggravating his wounds by complaints:
' What then of the fact,' he said,' that he left his own house
and gods behind to lodge with the hated Carthaginians?
His modest house was hung about with shields and chariots
and javelins, all in remembrance of a mighty victory.
These weapons affronted his eyes, as his wife called out
from the threshold, 'Where to, Regulus? This is no Punic cell
which you should shun! This house preserves the printed forms
on our chaste marriage bed and our ancestral household gods
unstained by crime. Once more within this house I ask of you,
what have I done to cause you shame? I bore a son for you,
was blessed by the senate and fatherland. Look back! This is
the house from which resplendent in your consul's robes
of purple you watched the Roman lictors marching forth;
whence you went forth to war and whither used victorious
to bring back captured arms to decorate the doors with me.
I do not seek your embraces and the conjugal rights a marriage
guarantees, but do not insist in shunning your ancestral home,
consider it right to grant your sons one night of your company.'

'He kept pace with the Carthaginians as she wept, and shut
himself in their quarters, leaving behind her complaints.
The sun was scarcely shining on Oeta' s peak and the pyre
of Hercules[9], when the consul ordered the Carthaginians
to be called. And then we saw Regulus enter the gates
of the temple. The conclusions of the senators' debate,
and the words the sorrowing house then heard from him
at the last, he later related calmly to me in placid tones.
As he entered they summoned him by spoken invitation
and gesture to his accustomed seat and own familiar place.
He refused and declined to accept that place of honour.
And yet they still surrounded him and sought to take
his hand, begged him to restore to Rome so great
a general; they said he could be ransomed for a mob
of foreign prisoners and then the Carthaginian citadel
could burn at the hands that Carthage once had chained.

He then raised his hands and eyes at once to the sky:
'O Lord of all, fount of Justice and of Righteousness,
and Loyalty divine, of no less weight to me, and Juno of Tyre,
the gods I called upon to witness my oath I would return,

[9] In short, it was dawn.

if I may speak words worthy of me and by my words
keep safe the hearths of Latium, I shall return to Carthage,
with all despatch, true to my oath to return and pay due penalty.
And so desist from offering me honours that will bring about
the ruin of the state. So many years at war have weakened me;
eight years imprisoned in Carthaginian chains have dulled
an old man's strength. This man is what he never was before.
For Regulus never did before shirk the hard taskmaster
that is Mars: you see merely a reputation now exsanguinate.
And Carthage, home of treachery, well knows how much I am
not what I was and prepares to trade my own senescent self
for their young prisoners of war, so keen to take to war.
Confound their guile, and let a race that delights in guile learn
itself to be beguiled, and though a captive I, yet Rome is strong.
No peace may truly please unless it is concluded in the manner
of our ancestors. The Carthaginians demand, and gave these terms
to me to bring to you, to be pleased to weigh this war on terms
of equality and agree on peace terms that favour neither side.
But I would rather enter through the gates of hell itself
before I saw the men of Rome make so base a covenant.'

Such were his words and he gave himself up now to the rage
of Carthage. The senate did not reject his warnings dire and true,
but dismissed the Tyrian embassy, who desolated at their scheme's
collapse made threats against their prisoner, set hasty sail for home.
The Roman populace beat their breasts in grief, all following
the senators until the vasty field of Mars was filled with noise:
in proper grief they wished to call him back and keep him home.

'But when his fearful wife observed him making haste to board
the ship a sudden dread descended, as if she stood at his grave;
she cried aloud in awful fear, and urged swift steps to the shore,
"Take me, you men of Carthage, to share his penalty and death.
One thing I beg of you, my husband, by our children, the fruit
of my womb: allow me to bring them too to suffer whatever
the labours are yours that are born of land or of sea or of sky.
It was not I that sent the Spartan general to wage war with you,
nor was your neck encircled in fetters and chains provided by me.
Why flee from me, poor wretch that I am, to Carthage? Take me
and these boys! Perhaps my tears may melt the stubborn hearts
of the men of Carthage, or, if that hateful city stoppers up
its ears, then the one and same final hour will lie in wait
for us all together; or if you are intent on putting a sudden end
to life, then let us die at home. Here is your perpetual companion."

'And as she spoke the hawsers were slipped and the ship
was cast loose to drift little by little away from the shore.
Then the wretched woman's mind raged, rent by grief,
she cried out, and stretched her palsied hands to the sea:
"Behold! A man who boasts that he keeps faith with his foes,
foul Carthaginians! Where though the promises made to us,

where now the pledge made sacred by our marriage bed?"
These cries the last to reach the unheeding ears of Regulus;
The rest of her words was drowned out by the din of the oars.

'Downriver then we made our way to the open sea,
and sailed its vast expanse in our ship of hollowed pine,
and ploughed the majestic waves with our curving prow.
In dread of a ludicrous death I prayed that the cruel force
of the sea might wreck our ship, or that a raging south
east gale might drive us on rocks, and death be shared,
but gentle Zephyrs and a moderate breeze transported us
to punishment, and handed us over to Tyrian wrath.

'I saw and was sent back and returned to my native Rome
to tell of his punishment, harsh price to pay for my release.
Nor would I even try today to describe for you the men
of Carthage, mimicking the manners and rage of wild beasts,
if the race of humankind had ever seen in all of the world
a greater example of courage than that which your sire's
revered fate did provide: it shames me to lament the pains
which I saw him endure with stoic calm and no lament.
And you, my dear boy, be sure render yourself deserving of
such a noble lineage, and restrain your springing tears.
On every side of him was bound a wicker man, its frame
of wood well armed with iron spikes of equal length
and by means of a fiendish skill there were arranged
more blades in rows erect, as fatal goads to cheat him
of sleep, so when time passed his drowsiness forced
him helpless against them, to fatally pierce his inner self.
Refrain from tears, young man: such fortitude outdoes
all triumphs. His laurels will be green[10] through time,
so long as unsullied Loyalty maintains her seat on high
and on the earth; so long as the glorious name of virtue
survives; a day will come, famed Regulus, when men
of lesser worth will shudder at the fate you minimized.'
So Marus spoke in sadness and tended Serranus' wounds.

Meanwhile in Rome on swift and bloodied wings dipped
and stained in the ensanguined waves of Trasimene
both fact and fiction Rumour spread throughout the city.
Nightmare memories of the Allia and foul Senones, the citadel
in enemy hands[11] assailed the citizens: the fear that comes
with grief shook off its reins, and apprehension fed the storm.
Here there's a rush to the walls. A horrid cry is raised,
'The enemy is here! Deluded men hurl stakes and foolish spears.
The women with their torn grey locks sweep lofty shrines
of the gods, harassing them with prayers that are too late
for their fallen kin. Neither shadowed night nor the light
of day brings rest; the populace waits at the different gates

[10] The translation here is taken from Duff's Loeb *ad loc.*
[11] In 391 BCE the Senones, a Gallic tribe, captured and sacked Rome.

and howl their grief, and the mass of citizens track the path
of the train of fugitives; they hang on the lips of those
who speak, loth to believe good news, again they stay
them with prayers, their faces beseeching them silently,
afraid to hear the answers they demand. They weep
when sad news assails their ears, others are afraid
if the messenger claims ignorance, knows not what to say.
And when the troops of fugitives come into closer sight,
they are the centre of a crowd at once concerned and glad,
their very wounds are kissed, gods wearied with thanks.

Amongst this anxious crowd Marus led Serranus with
a care to wonder at, when Marcia, who not once had left
her house since Regulus' death, but shunned society,
endured life only for the sake of her sons, rushed out
of doors to grieve as long before. Of a sudden disturbed
and recognizing Marus, 'Faithful comrade of a loyal friend,'
she said, 'you return this son to me at least! How slight
his wound, or has the harsh pike bitten deep in my heart?
I care not so Carthage does not snatch him off in chains,
inflict on him the horrors of his father's punishment,
thanks be to gods! How oft I begged, my son, that you
might not bring your father's rage and fury to the war,
nor should his grim reputation prompt you to emulate
your father's warlike drive. I have paid the harsh price
of a life lived too long. I beg the gods, to spare me more,
if you have fought against us.' And now as if the storm
of disaster had gone, the senate discussed how best
to relieve their exhausted state, each man strove to find
the means of war, when a grander peril routed present fears.
Their greatest concern was to choose another general,
upon whose strength the shattered state might depend,
as it faced disaster. It was Jupiter's concern to extend
the life of teetering Italy and preserve the rule of Rome's
dominion. For from his Alban temple he had looked down
on Tuscany, had seen the Carthaginian puffed with success,
who now victorious prepared to besiege the walls of Rome.
Then shaking his head: 'Jupiter', he said, 'will never give
you leave, bold youth, to pass through the gates of Rome,
with impious tread. To strew the vales of Tuscany with
our dead, and make our rivers overflow their gory banks
with Roman blood, I did allow: but I forbid your assault
upon Tarpeia 's rock and any designs you have to breach
the walls of Rome!' And then four times he flung from his
right hand his coruscating bolt, lit up the skies of Tuscany,
and, rolling a broil of black cloud through the heavens, split
that black cloud above the Carthaginian force. And not enough
to turn back Hannibal: through power divine he led the men
of Rome to vest the seat of Romulus, and the reins of Rome's
salvation in Fabius' safe hands. And when he saw him made
the lord of war, he said, 'This Fabius will never succumb

to jealousy, nor yet to the toxic attraction of popular fame,
nor yet to crafty deceit nor booty's lure nor any other vice.
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Then shaking his head: 'Jupiter', he said, 'will never give
you leave, bold youth, to pass through the gates of Rome,
with impious tread. To strew the vales of Tuscany with
our dead, and make our rivers overflow their gory banks
with Roman blood, I did allow: but I forbid your assault
upon Tarpeia 's rock and any designs you have to breach
the walls of Rome!' And then four times he flung from his
right hand his coruscating bolt, lit up the skies of Tuscany,
and, rolling a broil of black cloud through the heavens, split
that black cloud above the Carthaginian force. And not enough
to turn back Hannibal: through power divine he led the men
of Rome to invest the seat of Romulus, and the reins of Rome's
salvation in Fabius' safe hands. And when he saw him made
the lord of war, he said, 'This Fabius will never succumb
to jealousy, nor yet to the toxic attraction of popular fame,
nor yet to crafty deceit nor booty's lure nor any other vice.
He is a veteran in war, and accepting of victory or defeat
with composure, adept at the skills of both war and peace.'
So spoke the Father of Gods and retraced his path to the stars.

This Fabius, so praised by Jove, was circumspect in his campaigns
and not to be tricked. He took a wonderful joy on his return
from battle in a headcount of troops that matched the sum
of men he had led with him when setting out for the war.
No man was more keenly cautious with his life or his dear son's,
more saddened to see his comrades' blood be spilled in war,
this very same man who sought the welcoming walls of Rome,
quite soaked in hostile blood himself, victorious, his men unscathed.
His family was of noble birth, its founder kin to the gods.
For long ago great Hercules returning from far distant shores
in triumph drove his cattle, where glisten now the walls of Rome,
these cattle the pride of Geryon[12] and their sight a source of awe
to men. A man of Arcadia then, the story goes, was siting a house
at that time upon the Palatine, among empty thickets of thorn,
a king whose people were poor; his royal daughter succumbed
to the hero's charm and bore a Fabius – no shame in that – and she

[12] 'To accomplish his tenth labor, Hercules had to journey to the end of the world. Eurystheus ordered the hero to bring him the cattle of the monster Geryon. Geryon was the son of Chrysaor and Callirrhoe. Chrysaor had sprung from the body of the Gorgon Medusa after Perseus beheaded her, and Callirrhoe was the daughter of two Titans, Oceanus and Tethys. With such distinguished lineage, it is no surprise that Geryon himself was quite unique. It seems that Geryon had three heads and three sets of legs all joined at the waist.' From the Perseus project.

commingled her Arcadian blood with that of Hercules to become
the ancestral mother to one of the lines of Hercules' descendants.
This single house once armed three hundred Fabii to venture forth
against an enemy[13]; but Fabius himself outdid their splendid deeds
through delaying tactics and showed himself more than a match
for general Hannibal. For such was your stature then, Carthaginian!

While Rome in defeat refurbished itself for a further round of war,
then Hannibal, all hope now lost of laying siege to the city's walls,
repulsed by Jupiter, sought the hills and pasturage of Umbria,
where Tudertum[14] clings tightly to its precipitous mountain top,
extending too down its spreading sides, where sited on its
wide open plains Mevania exhales slow moving shrouds of mist,
and gives a home and food to those huge bulls that were a gift
for Jupiter. His army flooded then across the olive groves
of Picenum, rich in booty, and he moved his wandering troops
wherever the promise of spoils attracted his plundering men,
until the gentle Campanian plain delayed his devastating raids,
and she played host to war in her defenceless hinterland.

While Hannibal observed the temple and homes of marsh-bound
Liternum, he noticed a splendid mural, painted in polychrome
as a monument to the war a former generation had fought
to the finish. These pictures were still to be seen upon the portico
and provided a long and visible history of that war's events.
First Regulus argued for war, his face a model of belligerence;
a war he should have argued against, had he known his fate to come.
Next Appius was revealed with a crown of laurel binding his brow,
the first to declare a war on Carthage in the traditional way:
he led his triumph so justly earned by the count of Punic dead.
Hard by there rose a column of marble, white as snow, adorned
with warships' beaks, a testament to maritime success;
here Duilius dedicates his spoils as a gift to honour Mars,
that Duilius, the first to sink a Carthaginian fleet at sea[15].
A sacred piper attended him, along with flaming brands,
nocturnal honours after the feast, as he made his way back
to his pious home, the merry sound of music marking his path.
Next Hannibal sees the last rites afforded a fellow countryman,
deceased; for Scipio, victorious in Sardinia, conducts the burial
of a Carthaginian general. He sees a force of Romans rampage
through the remnants of an army defeated on the coast of Africa,
while Regulus, his crest aglitter, gives chase and presses hard
upon their rear; the Autololes, Numidians and Moors the men
of Ammon and the Garamantes surrendered their arms and towns.
The Bagrada, its sluggish stream foaming over the desert sands,
is depicted there with its toxic slime, a legacy of the snake's
assault upon the general, its battle with his threatening troops[16].

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[13] See Book 7, 39ff.

[14] This is modern Todi, a town in Umbria.

[15] Duff's note *ad loc.* 'In 260 B.C. C. Duilius, consul in that year, defeated a Carthaginian fleet at Mylae, on the N.E. coast of Sicily.

There too Xanthippus the Spartan general cries out in vain
to the gods to witness his drowning, thrown in treachery
from the deck and into the sea, to pay to you, my Regulus,
a tardy penalty delayed of a death that was so well deserved.
They had added too the twin Aegatian islands rising from
the waves; you there could see the flotsam and jetsam of
a ruined fleet and wrecked Carthaginians adrift on the deep.
Lutatius was master of the sea and, victorious, and piloted
the captured ships towards the shore on a favourable breeze.
There too was Hamilcar among the fettered ranks, the sire
of Hannibal, who turned the gaze of all the host upon
himself, away from all the painted images of past history.
And yet one might see the face of Peace and altars fouled
by treaties forsworn, with Jove deceived, and the men
of Rome dictating terms[17]. The Libyans' necks then flinched
in horror from the naked axe heads and, hands outstretched,
begged pardon and swore an oath that they would not keep.
And Venus looked on delighted from her Sicilian mountain shrine[18].

When Hannibal had surveyed all this with hostile gaze,
he sneered and cried aloud from a slowly building rage:
'The deeds of my right hand, as great as these, I will gift
to you to carve on our abodes: let Carthage boast the sight
of Saguntum sacked, wrecked, burning and butchered both,
of fathers stabbing their sons. The conquered Alps demand
no meagre space; let the men of Garamas and Numidia guide
their lofty mounts victorious across the mountain crests.
You may include the banks of Ticinus lathered with blood,
and Trebia made my own, the shores of Tuscan Trasimene
closed off with Roman dead, Flaminius, that mighty man
of arms, crashing dead, the consul Scipio in bloody flight,
restored to to his companions upon the shoulders of a son!
Reveal these things to the people now. Still greater will come!
You, Carthage, will show Rome blazing with African brands,
and Jove, the thunderer, thrown down from Tarpeia' s rock.
Meanwhile, young warriors, upon whose strong right hands
my mighty deeds do so depend, come quickly now and as is right
and properly envelop these pictures in flame, convert them to ash.'

[16] See Bk. 2. 146ff.
[17] This phrase 'dictating terms' is borrowed from Duff *ad loc.*
[18] Venus had a temple on Mt Eryx in Sicily.

Punica: Book 7

Silius Italicus

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Book 7

Fabius decides upon a policy of caution in the field (1 – 19). One of Hannibal's prisoners, Cilnius, gives Hannibal the lineage and a description of Fabius' character (20 – 73. Religious observances at Rome (74 – 89). Fabius embarks on a process of re-establishing army discipline, while Hannibal cannot bring him to battle (90 – 122). Hannibal moves into Apulia and tries again to provoke Fabius into taking the field. Hannibal returns to Campania to ravage the Falernian countryside (123 – 161). Bacchus visits the ancient peasant, Falernus (162 – 211). Fabius explains his delaying tactics to his troops (212 – 259). Hannibal attempts to render Fabius unpopular by trickery (260 – 267). Hannibal escapes a dangerous predicament and camps in the open (268 – 376). Fabius, needing to go to Rome warns Minucius against going into battle (377 – 408). Carthaginian fleet anchors at Caieta and terrifies the resident Nymphs but are comforted by Proteus (400 – 493). Minucius' powers are made the equal of those of Fabius the Dictator (494 – 522). Fabius returns from Rome, gives control of half the army to Minucius who rashly engages with the enemy and needs to be rescued by Fabius (523 – 729). Fabius is hailed as 'Father' by Minucius and his men (730 – 750).

In troublesome times meanwhile Fabius was the solitary hope.
In headlong haste he armed Rome's allies and an Italy maimed
by war, and, an evergreen warrior himself, confronting the toils
to come despite his age, began to move his force against the foe.
Yet that more than human intellect thought little of javelins
and swords and powerful horse: against an undefeated general
and his millennia of Carthaginian troops he went out alone,
a single man comprising all the armoured might of Rome.
And but for that old man's superhuman strength and resolve
to stop by tactics of delay the help that Fortune rendered Hannibal,
that time had seen the final curtain down upon the name of Rome.
He set a limit on the favours that the gods bestowed upon the host
of Hannibal and put a stop - in the midst of their successful campaign –
to their string of victories; his policy of going slow bemused
a Carthaginian leader thus far elated by Italian defeats.
The greatest of generals, Fabius, kept safe the descendants of Troy
from a second fall, kept Italy safe in turbulent times, preserved
our glorious history, Carmentis' treasures and Evander's realm[1],
arise, come, lift your sacred head to its deserved place on high.

When once the new Dictator was appointed and new names emerged,
then Hannibal, considering the Romans would not have lightly changed
their magistrates in haste, became impatient to discover the man's
past fortunes and repute. Why was Fabius Rome's last resort
of an exhausted race, a man they thought might be a match
for Hannibal in these stormy times? His rival's calm maturity
concerned the general, his age that made him safe from stratagem.
He quickly summoned a prisoner of war and questioned him

[1] See Duff's note on Bk. 6. 631, 'Evander, a son of Mercury and Carmentis, brought a band of colonists from Arcadia to Italy: with the consent of King Faunus, he founded a city, called Pallantium after his birthplace, on one of the Seven Hills which was afterwards called the Palatine.'

about the style and family of Fabius, about his military feats.
His name was Cilnius who had been born in Tuscany, Arretium,
a man of a noble line, but an unfair fate had brought the youth
to the banks of Ticinus, where, thrown from his wounded horse
as it fell, he had bowed his neck to suffer Carthaginian chains.
This man was intent on escaping his fate by ending his life:
"Your business is not with Flaminius now, nor yet do you have
hot-headed Gracchus' plans upon your hands!" he said. "His line
is from Hercules, and if the fates had brought them forth in Africa
you would see the home of empire on the citadel of Carthage, Hannibal.
I will not lead you through a detailed catalogue of all his deeds.
The story of one battle will suffice for you to learn the metal of the Fabii:
the folk of Veii had broken a treaty and had refused to wear
the yoke of Roman slavery. War raged beside the very gates
of Rome itself and the consul roused the populace to arms.
No need for conscription then! The clan of Hercules subscribed
a private force and from that one home there marched in step
to war a close knit regiment of aristocratic fighting men.
Three hundred leaders leapt forward. And any one of these
you would in confidence entrust with the conduct a war,
but omens dire accompanied their march: the Bloody Gate[2]
on opening creaked and rattled with threatening sounds,
while the mighty altar of Hercules the god made moan.
They made their assault, but rigid bravery forbad they count
the enemy's men, whose very dead exceeded their own force.
In close order packed at times, at times dispersed across
the trackless ground they fought a worthy fight, and shared
the labour equally, while each man matched all in bravery.
All three hundred deserved a triumph at the temple of Jove.
Their hopes were dashed! And they forgot whatever gift
is granted humankind is doomed to fail at last. That band
of warriors who thought it wrong for the Fabian clan
to escape unscathed with Rome at war all fell together,
surrounded of a sudden and victims of divine ill will.
And yet you have no grounds for glee at their demise.
Our Fabius matches those three hundred! Such a life-force
in his limbs! Such wisdom in his work! Such strategy
concealed beneath that veil of caution and calm!
Nor though you are of an age when the blood is hot
will you the more swiftly spur the flanks of your horse
in battle than he, nor savage his mouth with the bit!"
Then after this the general saw he was eager for death:
"You rouse my rage in vain, you foolish man," he said,
"preparing to escape your servile chains in death,
but you must live! Let his neck be close confined in chains!"
So Hannibal spoke, engorged by daring and propitious gods.

The careworn senate and the matrons of Rome themselves

[2] According to Duff, n. *ad loc.* 'The Porta Carmentalis, between the Capitoline Hill and the Tiber, was called *Scelerata* after the destruction of the Fabii, who had marched out of Rome by that gate.'

repaired to the altars of the gods. Sad eyed and full of tears
the women marched in order, a company of mothers offering
a robe to Juno, accompanied by carefully constructed vows:
"Be present here, o queen of the gods, we pray, your dutiful
folk, patrician born, the women of Rome, and we bring a fair
and venerable gift, our needlework, made by our own hands,
and embroidered through and through with golden threads.
Until the dread of mothers dies, my lady, this shall be
your gown to wear, but, if you grant that we may drive
from our lands the stormy threat of Africa, why then
your crown will gleam with varied gems all set in gold."
They honoured Pallas too and Phoebus with appropriate gifts,
and Mars, the god of war, and Venus most of all the gods.
In desperate times such reverence for the gods is born
and roused. The altars rarely smoke when all is well.

While Rome performed the ancient rites in honour of the gods,
then Fabius advanced his stealthy force. His tactics smacked
of lethargy, but they had blocked all avenues of advance
for Fortune and the foe. No man was allowed to leave
the ranks, and discipline, which exalts the head of Rome
to heights imperial, chief glory of the state, he instilled in them.
But when far off the standards first were spotted on the hills
above and the army glittering with fresh armaments,
the Carthaginian's hopes were raised and Hannibal is fired
by former fortune. His certain victory is but delayed because
the armies are not as yet deployed: "Advance!" he cries,
"Make haste! Advance upon the gates of Rome, destroy
their ramparts with your breasts! The gap between our ranks
alone now keeps the enemy safe! Their dregs are called
to war, old men, unworthy combatants for us. Observe
now what is left, condemned as useless when war began.
Where now the Gracchi[3], where now the brothers Scipio[4],
their nation's thunderbolts? See! Driven out of Italy they fled
in fear until their panic brought them to the world's end
and Oceanus' stream; each wanders now an exile in dread
of my name, and keeps himself beside the Ebro's banks.
My glory grew the more when Flaminius was slain and I
am pleased to add that battle hardened warrior's name
to my record of success: how little though of life my blade
will take from this fellow Fabius! Yet still he dares to fight.
And let him dare. I warrant he'll be seen no more at war!"

And so his battle cry as he urged his army on at speed,
and, riding to the fore, he made his challenge with fist
upraised, and taunted his foe and cast his spear from afar,
and rode triumphantly on, anticipating the battle to come.
Just so the son of Thetis carried the arms of Vulcan on

[3] Ti. Sempronius Gracchus, consul in 213 BCE.
[4] Publius Cornelius and Gnaeus Cornelius Scipio who fought in Spain against Hannibal's brother, Hasdrubal, in Spain. Both died in battle on that campaign.

the plains of Troy, inscribed upon his shield both earth
and sky and his mother's seas, an image of the world entire.

An observer of this fruitless anger Fabius sat atop a hill
nearby and tamed the Carthaginian's tumid heart,
defused his baffled threats by war long time procrastinate
and skilled delaying tactics. Just as in the dark of night
the shepherd sleeps secure, his flock protected in the fold,
while the pack of wolves, beside themselves with hunger,
quit famished, rage outside and howl and gnaw
and rattle the bars that keep them from the sheep.

Disappointed in his schemes then Hannibal slowly marched
across Apulia and would camp at times and hide his troops
in some secret vale in order to gain a chance to fall upon
a pursuing force and in a surprise attack surround them;
next in the blindness of night he organizes covert operations,
and makes a pretence of false retreats and simulated panic
attacks; abandoning camps in haste he profligate leaves
his booty behind and leads his watchful rival into temptation.
Just so the Maeander flows everywhere through Lydia's lands,
retracing its crooked course until at last it unites with itself.
His plans lack nothing in guile; he constantly varies his game
plan, sharpening his mind on a multitude of strategies.
Just so the light of the sun, reflected off water, shines bright
through the house, and shimmers with the vagrant spill
of reflection, while shadows flicker across the ceiling's span.
And raging now and furious Hannibal rumbled in his wrath:
"If this man had carried his spears against us at the first,
would then the names of Trebia and Trasimene be still
unsung? Would no Italians grieve? Would Phaëthon's stream[5]
have never discoloured the sea with its river of blood?
His waiting game is a novel path to victory and our strength
is wasted by inaction and delay! How often has he made a show
of aggression, only to foil our plans by craft, reveal our trickery."
So Hannibal's thoughts as the trumpet split his sleepless night
at midnight, while now the third watch were called to arms,
their slumbers broken, to assume their unpleasant vigil there.
He now reversed his path, abandoning Daunus' land and came
again to Campania, notorious there already for his plundering.
He invaded now indeed the fruitful regions of Falernus' land –
rich soil is here which never disappoints the agriculturalist –
and set cruel fires to burn amongst the fruitful orchard trees.

Although great enterprises urge me on, still, Bacchus, I must not
in silence overlook your honours due. O god that gave the gift
of wine divine, you shall be remembered, as shall the gravid vines
whose nectar allows no other vintage preference over Falernian.
In better times when swords were still unknown Falernus, a man

[5] Phaëthon fell into the Po (Eridanus) when his attempt to drive the chariot of the sun ended in disaster.

advanced in years, did plough the Massic[6] heights, when the vine's
green foliage did not upon the empty land weave shade for the grape,
and men did not know how to charm their cups with Bacchus' wine,
accustomed to slake their thirst with pure water from the spring.
A lucky step and hour once brought Bacchus, on his journey west
towards the setting sun, to a place of welcome hospitality, nor was
the deity ashamed to pass beneath a humble roof, enjoy the care
of humble household gods: the smoke stained door gave welcome to
a willing guest, while a table was set in the fashion of poorer times
before the hearth; nor did the cheerful host understand that a god
had arrived, but in the traditional way he bustled hither and yon
with generous zeal so much as his aged strength would allow,
until the festal meal: apples he served in spotless basket-weave,
then swiftly brought out from his well-watered garden delights
that dripped with dew. He made the meal a splendid feast
with fresh milk and honeycombs, and, with no blood spilled
to pollute the chaste fare, he brought in the gifts of Ceres,
then plucked the first fruits from every dish in reverence
for Vesta, and threw these offerings into the midst of the fire.
Well pleased with the elder's care and attention you, Bacchus,
forbad his drinks to be deficient. Suddenly, wondrous to say,
his cups of beech wood foamed with nectar from the vine
in payment for his hospitality; a rustic milk pail next ran red
with undiluted wine, while from the fragrant grapes
sweet liquors made dewy damp the hollow oaken bowl.
“Receive my gift,” said Bacchus, “and evermore the name
of Falernus, dresser of vines, will earn renown, unknown
before.” – and then he revealed his godhead. Straightway
the ivy bound with purple glory Bacchus' shining brows,
his hair fell round his neck, a wine jar hung from his
right hand, and a vine that sprouted green from the shaft
of his thyrsus clothed the festive tables in Nysa's[7] leaves.
And nor could you, Falernus, easily compete with the wine's
delights, when in repeated cups, already prompting mirth,
with stumbling foot and tongue, you try to render thanks
in words scarce comprehensible - through headache sore –
to father Bacchus, until Sleep, made you close your eyes
perforce, yes, Sleep, Bacchus' constant attendant. Then when
at dawn the hooves of Phaëthon’s horses dispelled the dew,
Mt Massicus bloomed far and wide with fields of fertile vines,
and gazed amazed itself at the greenery and grapes
so bright in the sun. The fame of the mountain spread
and from that time the wines of wealthy Tmolus, Ariusa’s
nectared cups and Methymna’s fiery brew all yield
the palm and prize of victory to the vats of Falernus.

These lands were next laid waste and sorely harassed
by Hannibal, since the blood on his sword had grown dry,

[6] Mt Massicus in Campania was named for a legendary former inhabitant of the place.
[7] Nysa, an unidentified place in Asia Minor was the mythical second birthplace of Bacchus, the first being from Zeus's thigh.

but Fabius still duped the general. By now, though, wilful
ambition had spread throughout the camp and perverse desire
for battle swelled; the men were ready to plunge down the hill.

Enrol, my Muse, in the ranks of fame the man empowered
to conquer his own and his enemy's men, tame twofold rage.
“Had the senators considered me a man of passions hot
and intemperate temper,” he said, “of a temperament easily swayed
by the popular will, they never would have entrusted to my care
at the last a cause that was all but lost and in despair the reins of war.
My strategies have long been fixed and well considered. I will
succeed and keep you safe despite yourselves, intent on death.
Not one of you shall be allowed to fall because of Fabius!
If you are weary of life and yours the desire to be the last
to bear the name of Rome, are bored at such a time unless
you bring the badge of infamy to some new place through fresh
defeat and ruin's harsh din, then we must call Flaminius back
from hell's dark seat. Long since he would have given in haste
the imperative word and fatal sign for an headlong attack.
Do you not see the precipitous danger and imminent fate?
One victory more for Hannibal will suffice to end the war.
Stand firm, my men, and read your general's mind! And when
the time is ripe for action, then match your bellicose words
to triumph in war. Believe you me it is no difficult task
to be carried pell-mell into battle. An hour will serve for you
to flood the field in your entirety once the camp gates yawn.
Unless though Jove has looked down benevolent as men march forth
a difficult prize it is - and granted but few - to return unscathed.
Entrusting himself to a following wind and Fortune's good grace
lord Hannibal drives on his ship. Until those breezes fail
in turn, and the winds withdraw to desert his swelling sails,
delay will be our friend. For Fortune never favours any man

in perpetuity. Already his commissariat is much reduced,
as is his reputation, without any conscious need for us
to join in battle. Indeed, I soon may count this man among
my other claims to fame – but modesty forbids I make
that boast. And so do you demand the line of battle, skirmishing
and enemies? O gods above, allow such confidence of heart to last!
Meantime, put off the chance of further greater tragedy,
entrust the conduct of this war, I pray, to me and me alone.”
These words defused their rage. Their fearsome arms fell calm.
Just so when Neptune lifts his placid head above the troubled waves,
observes the whole of his domain and is in turn himself observed,
that time the savage winds dismiss their fearsome threnody,
no longer beat their forehead mounted pinions, then
the sea's expanse grows calm, infused with tranquil peace,
and the languid waves gleam brightly on the silent shore.

Hannibal's shrewd and cunning mind, alert to this, struck back
with a venomous trick. For Fabius worked some ancestral land

nearby, some paltry acreage turned by a minimum of ploughs,
but its Massic wine had famous made the fruitful soils.
So Hannibal's pleasure it was to stir up strife and sow seeds
of dissent in the Roman camp. He spared this land from flame
and sword, and devious left that land alone in a suspect peace,
as if the war was being prolonged by surreptitious treaties.

Yet Hannibal's savage trick was understood by Fabius who saw
the risks inherent, but lacked the time amidst the clash
of swords and trumpets' blast to fear sick jealousy and repel
this attack on his name by fighting a fight of outcome dubious,
until, with Hannibal creeping about and fruitlessly moving camp
from here to there in the quest for a battlefield to fight upon,
the dictator posted cavalry at a crossing of the roads to shut
him in where wooded ridges rose and steep and rocky hills.
The Laestrygonian stony heights of Formiae closed off his rear,
before him the sodden and dismal expanse that was the marsh
of Liternum. The place did not invite swordplay nor the use
of a soldier's skills, but Famine held them fast in her grip,
intent on exacting revenge for the miseries of Saguntum,
and a bitter end came nigh the combatants of Carthage.

Both by land and across the broad sea's calm profundities
Sleep holds total sway. The labour of the day is laid aside.
Mankind enjoyed the peace that is the gentle gift of Night,
but Hannibal's heart was consumed with burning cares
and night-time terrors forbad him drink in the draughts
of soporific night. He lifted up his limbs from his bed
and wrapped around himself the tawny yellow lion skin
which served as bedding when he lay stretched out upon
the crushed and grassy ground. And then he made his way
in haste to brother Mago's nearby tent, who was no less
a doughty warrior and lay himself to rest upon the hide
of a bull and tried to soothe his troubling cares with sleep.
His spear was planted in the ground not far from him,
and from its blade his fearful helmet hung suspended there.
About him also lay his shield and breastplate, sword
and bow and sling upon the ground in quiet inactivity.
Hand picked experienced youthful warriors lay next to him.
His warhorse already saddled up now cropped the grass.
The footsteps of his visitor roused him from a shallow sleep,
He exclaimed aloud and reached out too for his weapons,
“What cares, my brother, keep you awake bereft of sleep?”
Already on his feet, with a stamp of his foot he called
his men, stretched out upon the grass, to his encampment,
when Hannibal replied, “It is Fabius who replaces sleep
with sickening nights of anguish. His age alone now stands
against the speedily advancing thrust of my fated victory!
You see how we are quite hemmed in by armoured warriors,
and how his gathered and encircling troops enclose us all.
But come now, learn what further plans I have in mind

in this predicament. The cattle we have taken according to
the norms of war attend us across these pastures broad.
I shall order dry branches to be woven around their horns
and lightweight kindling bound and fixed upon their heads,
so when fire is applied and everywhere spreads abroad
its heat, the cattle will, spurred on by pain, rampage
throughout the hills to spread a firestorm from their necks.
Then terrified by this most recent alarm our Roman guardians
will ease their strict watch, fearing things worse than night .
So, if my plan is to your taste (for peril forbids delay)
let's gird ourselves for work!" Together then united
they sought the camp. And there among his horse
and men, his head supported on his shield, Maraxes lay,
surrounded by his plunder, dripping blood, who uttered then
a dreadful cry, as though engaged in battle in his sleep
and with trembling hand in eagerness sought the arms
upon his bed, and felt there too for his trusty sword.
Mago reversed his spear and with a blow aroused
him from his bellicose dreams: "Most mighty warrior, check
this nocturnal rage and save your bloodlust for the light of day.
We must use the night for covert operations, secret flight
and a safe retreat. My brother plans to weave dry twigs
around the horns of cattle beasts and, ignited, let them loose
throughout the woods so that the enemy might lose
his hold on us, and we may extricate our beleaguered force.
Let us break out and let this trick teach Fabius he is no match
for us in guile." The young man then brooked no delay,
delighted with the enterprise, and they made haste to the tent
of Acherras, a man whose need for sleep and rest was minimal,
not known as one to fill the night with sleep, he was wide awake
and caring for his warhorse, rubbing down the exhausted beast,
and washing its mouth where chaffed by the reins and bit.
His men were working on their weapons and cleaning the blood
coagulated on their steel, and investing the blades with fresh rage.
The brothers revealed their own intent, the needs of the time
and situation and urged him eagerly to go and begin the task
appointed him. Word spread quickly now throughout the camp.
Each officer advised his men and eagerly instructed them what
should quickly be done. An ardent fear did pressure their anxieties,
and hasten their pace while blind silence held sway and the deep,
dark shadows of night. The woven branches quickly succumbed
to the flames which flared high above the horns of the herd.
The cattle tossed their tortured heads[8] and extended the harm,
and, helped in this way, the flames began to spread and grow fat,
until their crests broke through the smoke and conquered it.
Through hills and bush and through the high and craggy peaks
that awful fire impelled the breathless bodies of beasts,
made mad stampede, and, nostrils filled with smoke, they strove
to bellow in vain. Nowhere are the fires held back or checked,

[8] The expression is borrowed from Duff's translation.

but Vulcan's accursed bane now ranges free through hill

and dale and the neighbouring shoreline is made illuminate.
As many fires as the stars the sailor sees from the deep,
his gaze fixed on the night sky as he ploughs the waves
in the night, as many as the shepherd sees from his lofty seat
on Garganus' peak when farmers fiercely scorch and burn
and blacken Calabria's downs to make the pastures rich.

The Roman troops whose shift it was to be on guard were shocked
by the sudden appearance of these wandering flames upon the high
mountain tops, believed the combustion spontaneous and helped
by no man's hand the flames grew fat untamed beneath the hills.
Had the fires descended from heaven, they asked in the midst
of their great dread, had almighty Jove's right hand hurled
his thunderbolts from on high, had the earth in its stress poured
from its blind and broken deeps a flood of sulphurous flame?
At once they flee, and swiftly Hannibal's army seized the pass
and exit and gleefully broke out into the open ground beyond.
And yet Fabius' watchful tactics had earned success thus far,
despite the victories at both Trebia and by the Tuscan lake[9],

so that Hannibal was content but to evade the Roman arms
and Fabius, who would indeed have pressed his army in hard
pursuit upon his fleeing foe, had not some obligatory rites
then summoned him to worship his ancestral gods.
As he turned for Rome he spoke to his junior, to whom
custom required he entrust the eagles and overall command,
and with these words gave anticipatory advice to guide him:

"If Fortune has not yet taught you caution, Minucius, from my
example, then my words will not suffice to guide you into paths
of glory true, and defend you from rash and misguided deeds.
You have seen Hannibal confined. His infantry and cavalry,
his legions dense with soldiers then availed him not at all.
Bear witness – I alone entrapped him – and shall at once again!
Grant only I feast the gods with rites and customary sacrifice.
Again and again I shall, should you refrain from battle, render him
entrapped, cut off by the mountains high and rivers in spate.
Meanwhile (and trust infallible experience) the waiting game
is best in troubled times. For triumphs may please many men,
and the death by steel of noble enemies laid low, but it is
a triumph enough for your Fabius to bring you safely home.
I put in your care an undepleted force and troops that are
unscathed. Restore them thus to me and take pride in that!
You soon will see the Libyan lion assault our defensive lines.
He soon will offer you spoils, and then fall back in retreat,
forever looking back, forever stoking your furious rage.
I beg you, close the gates, abandon all hopes for a fight.

[9] Lake Trasimene.

This warning should suffice, but if it is impossible for you
to calm your heart at my request, then as dictator I enjoin
you most solemnly not to take up arms." He left the camp
defended by these words and made his way back to Rome.

But see, the beaks of a Carthaginian fleet now ploughed
the seas off Caieta[10] and the Laestrygonian bay, helped on
by a favouring breeze. They had entered the harbour there
without resistance and the whole of the sea was foam
beneath their oars, startling the sisterhood of Nereids
from the crystal thrones in their cave, surfacing to see
their shoreline occupied by hostile prows upon the beach.
Then stricken by a dreadful fear the band of Nereids fled
and swam away in haste to familiar shores where lifts
from the midst of the deep the realm of the Teleboans,
far from their pumice caves. Here monstrous Proteus lurks
within his deep and cavernous lair, a seer who keeps at bay
the ocean's seething foam with an ample barrier of cliffs.
Now he was well aware of their fear and their concerns,
and yet he toyed with various shapes and terrified them
in the form of first a black, scaly and sibilant snake,
then roared and took the shape and tawny limbs of a lion,
"Pray tell," he said, "the reason for your journey, and why
your sudden pallor. Why desire to know what is to come?"

To which Cymodoce, the eldest of the Italian nymphs,
replied, "Great Seer, you know the reason for our fears.
What means this Carthaginian fleet that occupies
our shores? The gods are surely not removing the realms
of Rome to Libya? Or shall Phoenician sailors seize our port?
Must we now flee our native land to seek new homes
in the far flung caves of distant Atlas' or Calpe's shore?"

And then the shape-shifting seer began, unfolding his tale
from its beginnings to reveal what lay in store for them,
"When Paris, Laomedon's shepherd son, sat on Ida's mount,
and summoned with his tuneful pipe his wandering bulls
through trackless scrub to pastures still damp with dew,
he was chosen to witness the contest of beauties divine,
when a Cupid drove the snowy swans of his mother's car,
and was anxious not to be late for beauty's test.
From his shoulder hung and shone a tiny quiver and a bow
of gold, and he nodded his head to calm his mother's fears,
and showed her the quiver he carried, heavy with shafts.
Another was combing the lovely hair about her snowy brow,
while still another fastened the folds of her purple robes,
as Venus sighed and addressed her gorgeous boys like so
from rosebud lips, "Behold, the day has come to prove
and witness your loyalty to me. For who would think

[10] A coastal town on the border between Latium and Campania.

so long as you were safe that Venus would struggle to win
the prize for beauty – and what is more important? If I give
to my children all my arrows steeped in aphrodisiac, and if
your grandsire, maintainer of law in heaven and on earth,
ever stands a suppliant before you, subject to your whim,

then I will return triumphant to Cyprus the palms of Pallas,
and Paphos' hundred altars will smoke for Juno's loss to me."
While Venus thus enjoined her winged children, the whole
of the grove resounded to a goddess' tread. For the warrior
maid, Pallas, aegis laid aside, and her hair so often hid
beneath her helmet falling now in braids, with a peaceful look,
self-consciously assumed and evident in her eyes, she came
to the appointed grove, carried on swift and sacred feet.
Now Juno, Saturn's daughter entered the woods as required,
to submit herself to the judgement of a Trojan shepherd on Ida,
when fresh from her brother's bed. And Venus came at the last,
her shining face alight with smiles. The groves all about
and the all the hollows deep set within the bush clad hills
drank deep of the perfume that breathed from her head divine.
The judge could scarce sit still; his gaze dropped, burned out
by the blaze of her face and afraid to have registered doubt.
The losing goddesses though brought harsh war across the sea
and Troy was destroyed and as well with her the man who made
the judgement, but pious Aeneas, storm tossed by land and sea,
then settled the household gods of Troy in the native soil of Italy.
While monsters shall breast the waves and stars light up the sky,
so long as the sun shall raise himself from out the eastern sea,
Rome's rule will last and no limit be set in time to her dominion.
And you, my daughters, so longs as Fate's fixed thread runs on,
shun ill fated Saso's Adriatic isle and her unlucky shores of sand.
The swollen Aufidus will blend its bloodied stream with the sea
and drive its ensanguined flood far out and into the distant deep.
And on the battlefield cursed long ago by the songs of the gods
Aetolia's ghosts will once more engage the forces of Troy.
The spears of Carthage will shatter soon upon the walls of Rome.
Metaurus' fame shall shine through the bloody defeat of Hasdrubal.
Next in line, the bastard born, shall avenge both his father's death,
and avenge his uncle's as well. Then he will fill Dido's shore
with flames and pluck from Italy's heart the Carthaginian brand
that is burning there and at last defeat him in his native land.
His arms will conquer Carthage and earn him the name of Africanus.
He will himself produce a son to finish the third of the wars
on Carthage, and bring her ashes back to Rome in victory."

While the prophet in his cave revealed the secrets of the gods,
already the current master of the horse and war had put out
of his mind both Fabius and his advice and sped toward the foe.
And Hannibal was not loth to feed his folly, sustain his rage:
with minor sacrifices made he encouraged him to undertake
a major battle, giving all the while an impression of retreat.

Just so the fisherman will scatter bait across the waters deep
to tempt his catch to emerge from its liquid haunts far below,
then when he sees it lightly swimming ‘neath the surface there,
he lures it captive into the shore and his billowing net.

Then Rumour ran wild – “The enemy is routed!” “Hannibal
seeks safety in flight!” “If only the Romans might strike hard
an end would be put to defeats!” “But virtue lacks authority,
and punishments lay in store for those who dare a victory.”
“Soon Fabius would confine the troops to camp, command
the sword be sheathed so that the warrior may be called
to account and clear himself of the guilt of defeating the foe.”
Thus the mob. And Saturn’s daughter[11]provoked the hearts
of the senate with jealousy’s sting and the gossip of the plebs.
A decree is passed – scarce credible! – to suit Hannibal’s wish,
which they soon would pay penalty for with no mean defeat.

The Roman force was split in two and equal powers, bestowed
on Fabius and the Master of Horse. The older man, devoid
of rancour looked on, and feared his native land, so ill-advised,
might pay a grievous penalty for this profound mistake.
With many such thoughts in mind he returned from Rome,
divided the troops with Minucius and then made camp on a hill
close at hand, where from his lofty vantage point he could
observe the Roman troops no less than the Carthaginian camp.
Minucius, however, struck camp with no delay and his heart
was fired with a self- hurtful passion to be destroyed.

From their different lookouts Hannibal and Fabius saw
him leave his camp in haste and each at once made plans
to suit the moment. Fabius told his infantry to arm themselves
with all despatch and held back his horse behind the battlements,
while Hannibal hurled all his force of men into the front line,
and the Carthaginian spoke and urged his troops forward so,
“While Fabius is absent, men, attack and seize the opportunity!
Behold, the deity offers us our hearts’ desire – a battle waged
on open ground. The opportunity is ours to take so clean
the ingrained dirt from your swords and slake their thirst
with much blood shed and steep their rusted blades in gore.”

All this the Procrastinator[12]considered from his lofty belvedere,
his gaze sweeping the plain, grieving that Rome would only learn
the truth of how much Fabius was worth at a dreadful cost.
His son at his side in arms declared, “That foolish man will pay
the penalty which he deserves! It was through a purblind vote
that he usurped our own auctoritas in the face of this threat.
Be witness now, crazed tribes! So much for slippery rhetoric
and a forum that delights in vanity! Let them share abroad
command in war and, mere civilians, let them resolve that day

[11] Juno, perennial enemy of Rome.
[12] In Latin *Cunctator*, a nickname adopted with great pride by Fabius.

succumb to darkness. The cost they pay will be great for madness
inspired by criminal folly, and their abuse of my sire!"
And then the older man as he brandished his spear and wept,
"My son, such truculent words as these must be washed away
with Carthaginian blood. Shall I allow my fellow citizen to die
before my face and nerveless hands? Shall I let Hannibal win
while I watch helpless on? If such were the way of my heart,
would not they be blameless too who made Minucius my peer?
Now hear these words of advice from your aged father, son,
and keep them evermore inscribed beneath your heart.
It is treason to rage at Rome, and no more grievous crime
than this can be brought by mortal men to the shades below.
Our fathers taught this truth. What a great, a noble man were you,
Camillus, when, an exile once, expelled from home and gods
you drove triumphant to the Capitol! How many enemies fell
to your condemned right hand! Had not this hero's heart
remained at peace, and his mind impervious quite to rage,
Aeneas' realms would have changed their imperial home,
and, Rome, you would no more be standing on your pinnacle.
Abate your rage for me, my son. Let us bear arms in unison
and accelerate our work!" The sounds of rival trumpets clashed.
The swift and onward rush of men brought them together.

The Dictator was first to manhandle and knock down the bars
and tall gates posts and hasten his course direct to the fight.
No greater the power deployed when the winds wage war,
north wind from Thrace and the sou' wester from Africa,
that powers the Syrtes, when in maddened strife they strain
and twist, and tear the sea asunder, each driving his particular
storm surge to different shores. The tempest screams, the sea
is snatched now here, now there as waves tumble and roar.
The conquest of the Punic lands and Carthage in ruins in no way
could match as honours won the wrongs he suffered, sprung
from envy of success. For this single man at one and the same
time conquered all types of difficult obstacles – fear and Hannibal,
rage, jealousy and he trampled underfoot all ill fortune and lies.

When Hannibal saw the Romans charge from their high rampart,
his angry spirit quailed and with a heartfelt groan the hopes
assumed in advance of a certain crushing victory were dashed.
He had surrounded Minucius' men within a dense ring of troops
to kill them trapped there with a rain of missiles from all sides.
The Roman general in his ill conceived encounter had by now
despaired, with thoughts of Hell and the eternal shades in mind
(he was ashamed to hope for any help from Fabius and his men)
when the older man enclosed the battle field with his twin wings,
surrounded with a larger circle the Carthaginian force at the rear,
cut off the enemy troops, closing in tightly with his own outer ring
to blockade the former blockaders. Hercules granted him to seem
to stand much taller in the fight: his helmet crest did coruscate
on high, and wonderful, of a sudden there surged great strength

through his body and limbs. He hurled spear after spear at the foe
and pressed the enemy back with clouds of missiles and darts.
Just so, when his youth had fled, the King of Pylos, Nestor, fought
in the second stage of his maturity, old age not yet at hand.

Onward he charged and slew Thuris and Butes, Naris and Arsen,
also Mahalces who trusted in his handiwork in conflict, a warrior
of great renown who had won his reputation with the javelin.
He then laid low both Garadus and Adherbes of the flowing locks,
and Thulis, the tallest man in either of the lines of battle there,
who could reach and grasp the topmost battlements on a lofty wall.
He slew these from afar, Sapharus and Monaesus with his sword.
A fatal blow struck Morinus upon the right cheek as the blast
of his trumpet stirred the men to battle, and through the wound
and from the transfixed cheek the blood, expelled by his last breath,
emerged and flowed out through the trumpet's mouth itself.
And next to him fell Idmon, a man of Nasamonia, slain by a javelin.
For slipping on the still warm blood beneath and striving in vain
to keep his feet he was felled by a blow from Fabius' horse,
and as he tried to lift his damaged limbs up from the ground,
the spear of Fabius, driven hard, pinned him down and was left
standing in the wound and planted in the ground the shaft
then quivered as the victim moved, and kept Idmon' s corpse
fixed firm to the battlefield, to serve as an offering there.

The younger men were fired, inspired by Fabius' laudable deeds,
Torquatus, hardened in battle, alongside Metellus - and with him too
a Sulla and a Crassus, and together at once they entered the fray
and all were willing to die, if only they were witnessed by the eyes
of Fabius upon them. Poor Bibulus backtracked as he made
to avoid the destructive mass of a mighty stone that was thrown
at him, but slipped on a pile of Roman dead, as he made his way
back, and falling, was pierced by a weapon that by chance
protruded from a corpse, was pierced where his corselet was loose,
the buckle now worn by many a blow, and so he received
the blade in his side and drove it deep within his vital parts.
An unfortunate death! He had escaped the Garamantian shafts,
the swords of the Marmaridae, only to fall and bleed upon
an insensate shaft, a weapon intended for another warrior.
His body lifeless slumps and his youthful beauty grows
pale and strange. His weapons slip from nerveless limbs,
and the dark sleep of death steals now across his eyes.

There had come to the war from Tyrian Sidon one Cleadas,
descended from Cadmus, by the prayers of Carthage aroused,
and he brought his troops to aid the Carthaginians, proud
of his Eastern archers. His helmet of gold was resplendent
with gems, as well his necklet of gold aglitter with stones.
Just so refreshed by the Ocean's wave does Lucifer gleam,
wins praise from Venus and competes with greater stars.
The man himself and his horse were clad in purple, as were

his entire force, all brilliant in dye from the vats of Agenor[13].
He made a fool of Brutus by wheeling his horse lightly about
him, now left, now right in tightening circles, Brutus, who was
so keen to fight, and wished to expunge such a famous name.
He fired a winged arrow shaft back, over his back, in the style
of the Parthians, as they beat a retreat from the battle line,
nor did his right hand fail, but the sharpened arrow struck
the squire of Brutus, Casca, - so sad a blow -square in the chin.
The arrow's steel tip on its upward path cut a slanting wound,
to pierce and lodge itself in the top of the boy's moist mouth.
Then Brutus, outraged by the savage fate of his squire and friend,
made no attempt on horseback to ride Cleadas down as he fired
repeated fierce volleys of deadly shafts while he feigned to flee,
but Brutus endowed his spear with all the rage in his heart,
let loose the soaring weapon, launched from a leathern thong,
to pierce with its point the top of the warrior's breast,
left naked where his collar of golden pendants hung loose.
He fell, transfixed by the spear, his bow still bent as he fell,
and let slip the bow from his left hand, the shaft from his right.

The Fortunes of Mars though favoured Carmelus much more
in the fight, Carmelus the pride and the joy of Apolline Soracte.
Already the blood of Bagrada, the leader and lord of Nubia's men
had stained his sword. And Zeusis too had fallen to his hand,
a fearsome scion of Spartiate Phalantus, founder of Tarentum,
yes, Zeusis, whom a Phoenician bore to a noble Spartan sire.
But Hampsicus, afraid of such a fate, nor game to trust himself
to engage with such an energetic foe nor even to flight, urged on
by fear, had wretchedly crawled through scrub and climbed
to the top of a neighbouring oak to hide himself in its lofty shade.
He stood on the boughs that quivering, shook beneath his bulk.
As he leapt from bough to lofty bough then Carmelus transfixed
this Hampsicus with a lengthy spear to stop his flood of pleas.
Just so the fowler, who clears the forest of birds with his lime
tipped lance, endeavours in silent hunting to snare his quarry,
pursuing the winged creatures far above his head in the tree
tops, deploying his extensible wand deep into the canopy.
So Hampsicus bled out his life, his life's blood flowing down
while his exsanguined limbs weighed down the curving branch.

By now the savage Romans were fighting with an enemy in flight
and stragglers, when Tunger the Moor, a man of dreadful bulk,
of a sudden rushed headlong into the fearful affray of the fight.
His limbs were black and black the team of horse that pulled
his lofty chariot, and the whole of that chariot itself was black
to match the black team's backs, a novel source of dread.
Nor had he failed to plant upon his helmet's topmost crest
a plume of black, while his cloak was also black to match.
So once the ruler of eternal night, lord Hades who ravished

[13] Sidon was renowned for the expensive purple dye made from the *murex*, a type of shell-fish.

the maid of Henna, young Proserpina, and sped deep down
to his bridal suite in hell in a chariot stained in Stygian black.
Young Cato, his cheeks betraying – just – a downy growth,
his origins – he was the pride of his native Tusculum
on Circe's peak, ruled once by Laertes' grandson, Telegonus[14].
Although he sees the Roman vanguard checked, withdrawn,
confused, he, undaunted, spurred on his hesitant steed
with iron heel and generously loosened reins, but the horse
refused to advance, spooked by the harmless shadow Tunger cast.
So Cato sprang swiftly from his horse's high back and into the fray
and chased the flying chariot on foot and leapt up from behind
as it flew. At once the reins and whip were dropped.
The Moor, unlucky man, grew pale as the blood fled
his face in dread of the sword that threatened his neck.
And Cato took his head, impaled it on his spear and rode away.

But Fabius, as savage as the fight itself, burst through the ranks
of breathless men to kill. And then - what a pitiful sight to see –
he saw Minucius, exhausted with wounds and a massive loss
of blood, desperately praying for an end to shame and misery.
Tears flowed down Fabius' cheeks and with his shield he defended
the fearful general and urged on his son, "Brave heart, let us wipe
away our shame," he said, "and now repay the Carthaginian
a full and worthy penalty for his kindness in not spreading fire
upon our pastureland.[15]" And then the young man took great
delight in his father's military skill and exhortations wise
and drove away his sword in hand toward the hostile ranks
that encircled him and cleared them from the plain, until
the Carthaginian leader, Hannibal himself, abandoned the field.
Just so when hunger urges him on the wolf, beloved of Mars,
behind the shepherd's back will seize a lamb, hold tight
the trembling youngster in its jaws, but, when its bleating cries
the shepherd hears and speedily confronts the beast, in fear
for its life it frees its prey from its fangs and deep maw,
still breathing the lamb, and skulks away with empty mouth.
And then at last the clouds with which the Stygian dark
had surrounded Minucius' men dispersed and fled.
Their hands were numb with fatigue. They claimed they were
unworthy of reprieve. Despair was transformed to sudden joy.
Just so men trapped beneath the weight of fallen masonry
will blink and shrink from gazing at the sun's bright light,
when of a sudden their limbs are freed and darkness flees.

When this was done then Fabius counted his men and was glad
and sought the hills and the camp secure within its barricade.
And, see, young men recalled to life from the brink of death,
how they shout their delight to the stars and march in long
procession praising the name of Fabius their saviour,
and with eager and upraised voices – Fabius their patriarch!

[14] The son of Ulysses and Circe.
[15] See Book 2. 260 ff.

And then Minucius, who had left before with half the force,
said, “Hallowed father, if I may make a true complaint, restored
as I am to the glorious light, what was the reason why we were
allowed to split our forces? Why did you suffer to give up the men
which you alone were fit to guide? Your generosity caused
our fall and the sight of our immortal and ensanguined dead.
Restore – and quickly, men – the standards Fabius saved.
He is our native land! The walls of Rome depend upon one man!
And, Hannibal, be done with guile and well worn stratagems
at last, you must now wage war with Fabius and Fabius alone!”

And when Minucius had had his say, a thousand green turf
altars were erected there in haste –an awesome sight to see.
Nor was it right for any man to lay a hand on Bacchus’ gift
of charming wine or food, until he’d made his many prayers
and poured out his sacred offerings upon the board of Fabius.

Punica: Book 8

Silius Italicus

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Book 8

Hannibal is anxious (1- 24). Juno sends Anna, Dido' sister and a nymph of the river Numicius as a messenger to bring comfort to him: she tells her own story and encourages Hannibal by foretelling the victory at Cannae (25- 241). C. Terentius Varro elected consul at Rome: he makes boastful speeches (242 – 277). His fellow consul, L. Aemilius Paulus, is afraid to thwart him. Fabius advises him to oppose Varro (298 – 348). The consuls set out for Apulia: their troops are catalogued (349 – 621. Omens before the battle alarm the Roman soldiers (622 – 676).

First Fabius granted Rome the sight of Carthaginian backs
in full retreat. The Roman army named Fabius their sire,
and him alone, and at him as foe alone did Hannibal direct
his rage, impatient of delay. The chance of more hostilities
depended on the hoped for death of Fabius and on aid in war
demanded from the Fates. Indeed, so long as that old man
drew breath, why, Hannibal's hopes for Roman blood were vain.
The Roman troops were united again, their standards restored
to one commander-in-chief, so Hannibal must again and again
contend with Fabius alone. These facts tormented his sick soul
with weighty cares. By delaying frenzied war and by the art
of shrewd procrastination Fabius made comprehensive gains,
while Hannibal's troops became subject to a dearth of war
supplies. Although a decisive hand to hand fight had yet
to be fought, the dictator had by now achieved supremacy.
And the volatile Gauls, ferocious at first and full of boasts,
but lacking in fixity of purpose and stability of mind,
were looking homeward. They bemoaned a war waged
bereft - unprecedented this - of death, of hands unstained
by gore, that grew enfeebled though they yearned for war.
On top of this domestic politics and civic jealousy increased
his troubles His efforts were opposed by Hanno, who forbad
the Carthaginian senate to send reinforcements from home,
or help out in any way with further funds or armaments.

Though careworn he and fearing the very worst of fates, Juno
restored his hopes of victory, rekindled his ambitions dire,
because she foresaw Cannae and took delight in what she saw.
Indeed she summoned Anna from the waters of Numicius[1],
addressing her as follows, a message filled with blandishments,
"A young man tied to you, goddess, by blood is in deep distress,
whose famous name is Hannibal, from Belus of Phoenicia's line.
Bestir yourself and hurry now to soothe his tidal wave of cares.
Shift Fabius from his troubled mind! For he, the sole impediment
to checks our subjugation of the Roman troops, is now disarmed.
His force must now engage with Varro, with Varro must he fight
his battles. Let him fulfil his fate and advance his standards now.
I shall be at hand. Let him march at once to the plain of Apulia.
The Roman tragedy of Trebia and Trasimene will there repeat itself."

[1] Anna Perenna, a nymph of the river was, according to Duff (note ad loc.) 'identified by the Roman poets with Anna, sister of Dido.'

Then Anna, nymph and neighbour of the sacred grove of Aeneas,
spoke, “Duty bound I am to fulfil your demands without delay.
I make but one request if I may, that I may retain the goodwill
of my native land and complete my sister’s weighty commands,
though Anna’s name possesses a place of honour in Latium.”
Far back in history and amidst the riddles of time long spent
there lies, hidden in the deepest dark of antiquity the reason
why the men of Rome give honour to a deity from Phoenicia,
and Dido’s sister is revered in the realms of Aeneas’s heirs.
I shall unsheathe the story, recalled from its mythic origins,
and retell in tightly disciplined verse that ancient narrative.

When Dido had been deserted by her Trojan guest and her hopes
cut short, she made her rash and frenzied way to the funeral pyre
within the palace and there she seized a sword, her mind intent
on suicide, the sword a final, fatal gift from her runaway man.
The rejected suitor Iarbas then placed himself upon the throne,
while Anna fled the smouldering pyre. Who would come to her aid
in her time of need, while the tyrant Numidian king spread terror
far and wide? By chance the gentle Battus ruled in Cyrene then,
with a temperate hand, and ever ready to shed a sympathetic tear
for human suffering. And when he saw the suppliant, he feared
for the fate of royalty and stretched his good right hand to her.
And she lived there in security the while the reaper brought in
two golden harvests of wheat. And when she could no more enjoy
the hospitality of her host, for he said Pygmalion was then at sea
and bringing with him a cargo of death for her wretched self.
And so she was taken to the sea, at odds with both the gods
and herself, because she had not shared her sister’s final voyage,
until, storm tossed herself, poor wretch, her sails in tatters,
a deadly tempest cast her ashore on the coast of Laurentum.
A stranger to that land and region, ignorant of its inhabitants,
she grew afraid on Latin soil, this shipwrecked Phoenician girl.
But see, Aeneas, his kingdom acquired, now came, and with him
his godlike son, Iulus, and she recognized Aeneas’s countenance.
And he with gentle hand did raise her up where she in dread
had slipped to her knees, and cast her gaze down to the ground
before his weeping son, and led her in, between the palace gates.
And when this noble welcome had eased her present cares
and fears of any hostility, he then, with sorrow in his voice,
did ask to learn of Dido’s unlucky fate and death.
In answer Anna began to speak, her words accompanied
with floods of tears, and her gentle voice did match the time,
“O goddess born, you were the one and only reason for
my sister’s life and kingdom. Her death and funeral pyre,
the which I should have shared, were testament to that. Once she
in wretchedness had lost sight of your dear face, she stood or sat
upon the shore in sadness, watching the course of the winds
and summoning Aeneas back and with heartfelt cries begged
that you might suffer her to board your ship as your sole
companion. And then she would betake herself all breathless

and in turmoil to your marriage bed to stand stock still
and trembling there before that sacred couch she feared to touch.
Distracted next she cherishes in her embrace the sculpted bust
of heavenly Ascanius, while next in a trice she turns her gaze
upon your likeness and hangs in turn upon your portrait, makes
complaints to you and hopes that an answer will ensue.
Love never abandons hope. And then she leaves her home
and palace and in her passion revisits the harbour once more,
in case the winds might reverse themselves and bring you back.
The vile, deceitful and inconstant Massylian race induced
her then to lower herself to resort to the black magical arts –
a curse upon all wizards' wayward ways! They conjured up
the powers of night and promised a cure for her disease –
naïve myself I saw horrors – she built an ominous pyre
and thereon placed mementos of you and your unlucky gifts.'

Aeneas spoke, revisited by the memory of love's delight,
"I now swear by this land, which often you heard figure in
my vows before, and by the head of gentle Iulus I swear,
beloved both by your sister and your own very self,
I left your kingdom sick in heart, and ever looking back,
would not have left our marriage bed had not Mercury
himself uttered dreadful threats and with his own right hand
set me on board and driven my fleet to sea with speedy winds.
But why – and my words of warning come too late – at such
a time did you let Dido's passion rage unrestrained?"

Then Anna spoke in reply through her sobs, her voice
strained, breathless, as it emerged from trembling lips,
"I was preparing novel rites for Pluto, dark lord of the dead,
and for his consort, the partner of his infernal marriage bed,
with which my poor sister might ease her troubled heart
and soul, and with my own right hand was leading black
fleeced lambs, making haste to exorcise an evil dream.
While I was asleep an horrific dread had filled my mind.
For three times Sychaeus[2] had loudly summoned Dido
as his own and showed his joyful and exultant face.
I drove this from my mind and prayed that at dawn the dream
should prove propitious and I bathed in a running stream[3].
Then Dido hastened to the shore and twice, three times
imprinted kisses on the silent sands where you had stood,
next lovingly embraced your footprints, every one of them,
just as a mother presses to her breast the ashes of a fallen son.
Again with frantic step and hair unleashed she arrived
at the lofty pyre that she had erected before, its bulk
enormous in extent. And from that vantage point the sea
was visible in its entirety and the whole of Carthage too.
Then, dressed in her Trojan gown and a necklace of pearls,
and after drinking in the memory of the day on which
she first saw those gifts, and recalled the feast that was held

[2] The dead husband of Dido.
[3] A form of ritual purification.

to celebrate your coming, and your recital of the history
of the labours of the men of Troy, a story she stayed awake
to hear, then distraught, in tears she looked towards the port…
"O gods of eternal night, whose power looms larger now
for those whose death is imminent," she cried, "help me,
and welcome a spirit undone by love with kindliness.
The wife of Aeneas, son of Venus, I avenged Sychaeus
and saw the citadels of our own city of Carthage rise.
The shade of a famous queen now makes her descent.
Perhaps the man who loved me so sweetly long ago,
is waiting, eager to match the love we knew before."
With this she lodged a sword deep between her breasts,
the sword which was sought as a pledge of Trojan love.
Her attendants saw and beating their breasts made haste
through the halls, and the halls were resonant with grief.
Ill starred, I heard the news, appalled by that awful death.
I scored my face with my nails, rushed frantic to the pyre,
and struggled to clamber up the lofty stairway there.
Three times I tried to fall upon that dreadful sword,
three times I failed, fell back across my sister's corpse.
The rumour now spread through the neighbouring towns.
the Numidian chiefs and savage Iarbas[4] all prepared for war,
while I, a fugitive of the Fates, and driven by them came
to Cyrene, whence the sea's strength brought me to your shores."

Aeneas was moved and conceived for Anna in her misery
a gentle sympathy and a mind intent on soothing hers.
Quite soon she had laid aside her grief and heartfelt cares,
and she no longer felt herself to be a stranger in the palace
of the Trojans. The blackness of night had wrapped all things
in soundless slumber across the earth and all the wide deeps
of the sea, when Dido appeared, her visage terribly sick
with grief, and in her sister's dream poured out these words,
"How can you, sister, bear to sleep so long and soundly in
this house, so credulous and trusting? Do you not perceive
the dangers and devices set for you, surrounding you?
Have you no understanding yet of how the men of Troy
are a blight upon our race and upon our native land?
So long as the sky makes turn the stars in vertiginous flight,
and the moon still sweeps the earth with a sibling's light
reflected, no peace will last between Carthage and Rome.
Come, rise – already I suspect Lavinia[5] is plotting secretly,
and is considering some dreadful crime beneath her heart.
And what is more – and do not think this dream is false –
not far from here Numicius flows down from a little spring
and unrolls its gentle current down the valley's floor.
Make your swift way there, my sister, to a haven safe!
The Nymphs will happily take you into their holy stream,
and your godhead will ever be honoured in Italy's land."
Thus Dido spoke, then vanished into the insubstantial air.

[4] A disappointed suitor of Dido.
[5] Lavinia is the Latin wife of Aeneas and suspected of feelings of jealousy against Anna.

This unprecedented dream shocked Anna from her sleep,
and the chilly sweat of fear trickled down her limbs.
Then, as she was, with but a flimsy gown to cover her,
she leapt from her sheets and leaving by a low set pane,
she ran across the spreading fields on nimble feet,
until, the story goes, Numicius took her into his sand
filled depths and concealed her in his crystal caves.

Daybreak had filled the earth with the sun's radiant light,
when Aeneas' men could find no sign of Anna in her room,
and wandering through the Rutulian countryside they called
aloud, and followed her clearly visible tracks to the banks
of Numicius. And, while they stood in wonderment,
the river halted its flow and its course from the highlands,
and then the stranger was seen seated among the Nymphs,
her cerulean sisters, and calmly she spoke to the Trojan men.
And ever since that time on the earliest days of every year
she has received honours divine throughout the land of Italy.

Then after Juno had encouraged Anna to promote the woeful war
on Italy, she sought once more the sky above in speeding chariot,
intent at last on tasting the Latin blood she so very much desired.
Then Anna, goddess, prepared to fulfil the goddess', Juno's, will
and, invisible to all, sought out the leader of the Carthaginian troops.
The general by chance had set himself apart from all his men,
was considering the precarious state of play and of the war.
His breathlessness betrayed his deep anxiety and wakeful mind.
The goddess eased his careworn mind with soothing words,
"Most powerful ruler of the Carthaginian race, why foster still
such great, uncalled for fears in your sick, distempered mind?
The rage harboured by the gods against you is entirely appeased,
their good will is entirely restored to you and yours. Come, rouse
yourself, brook no delay, but hurl the African forces into the fray!
The fasces have changed hands: heroic Fabius, of Herculean stock,
has abdicated charge of war and arms – the senate's foolish decree
to blame and some second Flaminius must wage war with you.
Be well assured the spouse of mighty Jupiter, the thunderer,
has sent me here to you. In Italy's land I am worshipped as
an immortal deity, but born of your Belus' blood and lineage.
Do not delay! Snatch up the thunderbolts of war with all despatch
where the heights of Garganus sweep down to the Apulian plain.
This place is not far distant, so thither direct your battle flags."
She finished then and her visage, bedewed, lifted up to the sky.

The general replied, empowered by the pledge of future praise,
"Nymph, glory of our countrymen, no deity do we revere so much
as you," he said, "and so fulfil your promises with favourable grace.
And I, in full control of the war, shall provide a marble shrine
for you upon the citadel of Carthage and will dedicate hard by
an image of your sister Dido. Both will win an equal share of dues."
So Hannibal spoke and prideful urged on his cheering companions,

“Lay heavy cares aside, my men, who are a fatal bane for Italy,
and lay aside the torments of sloth! We have placated the rage
of the gods. They return to our side! The niggard rule of Fabius
is over now, I say, and the fasces carried before a consul who
is new. Let each now place his good right hand in mine once more,
fulfil the promise of action made when debarred from the fray!
A goddess now promises a future greater than our past gains.
Uproot our standards and with leadership divine now seek the field
ill-omened for the Trojan men of Rome through Diomede’s name.’

And so the men of Carthage, hearts inspired, did march on Arpi,
while Varro, reliant on the people’s gift of the purple and power,
was raging on the hustings, and in his rush to fashion a chance to bring
the Carthaginian steeply down, advanced a fatal disaster for Rome.
His lineage was obscure, his parents’ name unknown, yet still
his impudent tongue was rampant and immoderate, but his voice
well tuned. So his fortunes grew and he freely shared his loot.
He flattered the plebeian scum, but barking abuse at senators,
and thereby so raised his profile in the war ravaged city of Rome
that he alone emerged as one to move the city on, adjudicate its fate.
Though Rome delivered would be ashamed of such a victor’s win.
The purblind votes of the people listed his baneful name among
the Fabii and of the Scipios, sacred to Mars, and of Marcellus,
who brought his high piled prize booty to Jupiter’s shrine,
while Varro’s fatal bribery bred Cannae’s dreadful killing fields,
a battlefield more deadly even than that on which Diomedes fought.
Although a rabble-rouser he and a citizen perverse, adept
at inflaming hatred, envy, he was but a tyro in the arts of war,
an mere apprentice to Mars and never yet tested with sword
in hand, yet hoped to win the glories of the hand to hand
through eloquence, and from the rostrum sound the battle cry.
All eagerness then he mouthed cheap attacks on Fabius’ delays,
harangued the senate before the mob as if triumphant then,
“As consul I demand of you, who wield the power supreme,
my orders to command the conduct of this war. Shall I remain
inactive, wandering the hills, while sunburned Moors and Africans
share Italy with me? Or shall I utilize the sword you gave to me?
Hear me, my fine Dictator, and the firm demands of the men
of Rome: they demand the men of Africa expelled and Rome
unburdened of her foe. Is this impatience? Three years now
their tearful suffering and circumstance have tortured them!
Therefore go and take up your warrior arms: the road is brief
to victory delayed! The very first day that reveals our enemy’s face
will end at once the senate’s tyranny and the Carthaginian war.
Look lively now, and I shall lead lord Hannibal with Latin chains
about his neck through all the streets of Rome for Fabius to see.”

Then after this rant he hastily led his forces through the city gates
and eschewed delay, just as the untutored charioteer at the drop
of the starting gate loses control of the reins and stretches to whip
his team, his footing unsure and is borne along headlong, no match
in strength for his horses. Axles smoke with excess of speed,

and tangled reins swing to and fro as the chariot weaves its way…
The man, one Paulus[6], to whom the voters had given an equal share
of civil and military power, observed the state's imminent fall
at the hands of the ill-starred consul - fickle though the rage
of a turbulent mob. Paulus' mind, scarred by prior events
curbed the resentment and pain seething within his troubled mind.
For once in his younger days his troops had conquered the shores
of Illyria, but envy's black tongue had yapped at the victor's fame
and he had been buffeted by the fickle winds of unjust calumny -
and so his inherent fear of the mob and its menacing threat,
although his family was kin to the gods and his lofty ancestors
connected him to heaven. Aemilius the founder of the clan claimed
as ancestor Assaracus and he, Assaracus could claim the same
of mighty Jupiter, nor would any man who saw him take up arms
deny his line. Now Fabius addressed him as he sought the camp,
"If you believe your chiefest battles will be with Hannibal, although
unwilling breaks this message from my heart, my Paulus, you are
mistaken quite. For bitter strife awaits you with the men of Rome,
a more dangerous foe in your own camp, or I have to no avail
experienced long time the vicissitudes of many warring days.
I heard Varro swear – and my old age does irk and trouble me,
if, as I suspect, the future holds the promise of ruin for Rome –
that he would launch his attack against this favoured general
of Mars the very hour he spotted him. How close are we, Paulus,
to total destruction, if the ardent Carthaginian receives any hint
of the consul's boast! Already I believe that Hannibal's battle line
is disposed to meet us on the vasty plains, and he expects a second
Flaminius will fall to his sword. How many men will you provoke
to battle, foolish Varro, who are so – gods above! – so bent on war?
Have you knowledge of the field, spent time exploring it in advance,
as well the customs of the foe? You have no skill in grubbing out
the enemy's resources, the strength of his position, his style of war
and more to the point, more crucial than any weapon, you have
no grasp of Fortune's role. You, Paulus, bring your rigid sense
of right to bear. If a single man may with impunity ruin Rome,
then what the crime in a single man as saviour? Vile Hannibal
is short of food and, appetite for war now blunted, his loyal friends
are wavering. No home in Italy invites him in as kinsman's guest
no cities welcome him within the battlements in which they trust,
no young men of equal age renew his youthful force's strength.
One third of the force of men that left behind the bloodied stream
of Ebro now survives. Endure, embrace the remedies a cautious war
provides, but if some favourable breeze of heaven's will brings you
encouragement, then speedily set your sail to the following wind."

The consul's reply to Fabius' advice was brief and melancholic,
"The path of duty ever lays before me, undefeated one. I shall take your lead
against the Carthaginians. Nor does our single tactic of

[6] L. Aemilius Paulus had been consul in 219 BCE and had been awarded a triumph for a victory in Illyricum. He fell into disgrace and was prosecuted subsequently for embezzlement. Silius suggests that this earlier experience had made him nervous of crossing the will of the populace, hence his inaction on this occasion.

delay escape my note, which you deployed until a weaker Hannibal
observed that his campaign and war were stalled and foundering.
But why this anger of the gods? One consul is heaven's gift
to Rome, I know, one Hannibal's boon. For Varro drags all
in his train, fears some other consul will witness be to Rome's
demise. A consul drafted from the very ranks of Carthage
would never wish to be so harsh to Rome. No charger on earth is swift enough
to speed that lunatic against the foe. When shady night falls to delays his
course he grieves. In arrogance he makes advance with swords all but half
drawn that there might be
no delay in making war caused by the need to unsheathe blades.
I call Tarpeia's rock to witness and the temple of my kin
divine, yes, Jupiter, and the battlements of my native land
so fortunate, its citadel still standing when I leave, that I shall go
wherever demands the safety of the state, all risks despised.
But if our eager armies, deaf to my advice, will still engage
in battle, neither shall the thought of sons, nor yet of the sweet
ancestors of Assaracus hold me back and never shall Rome,
sore wounded, see Paulus come home alive as Varro might!"

The consuls distracted by their conflicting views set off for camp,
while Hannibal was already positioned where Anna had foretold,
had chosen Diomedes' plain as his much favoured battleground.
The land of Italy had nowhere else resounded ever to so large
a company of warriors, or as many troops of cavalry under arms.
Men feared at once for the fate of their nation and its capital,
and did not expect an opportunity to fight a second fight.

The Rutulians, a sacred band, Faunus' descendants, entered
the war, abetted by the Sicani, who hold safe the land of Daunus, delighting in
their Laurentian home and the spring fed stream of Numicius. These were sent
by Castrum and Ardea, an enemy once of Trojan men and by Lanuvium, the
seat of Juno's steep hillside
shrine, Collatia too nursemaid and fatherland of Brutus the chaste[7].
The men who lover Diana's savage grove and Tiber's mouth
came too, men who bathe Cybele's image in Almo's tepid rivulet.
Next Tibur came, Catillus'[8] home, and Praeneste, its sacred hills
made consecrate to Fortune, and Antemna, more ancient than old
Crustumium, and the men of Labicum who skilful work the plough.
Then those who drink the waters of imperial Tiber's river flood,
those too inhabiting the banks of Anio who draw their water from
the chill Simbruvius and tame Aequicula's pastures with the hoe,
their leader Scaurus, yes, Scaurus, youthful still and of a tender age,
whose virtue though gave promising signs of lasting feats to come.
It was not their custom to hurl the spear upon the battlefield,
nor yet to make full their quivers with feathered arrow shafts.
Their preference the heavy duty javelin and short stabbing sword;
they wear helmets of bronze and their plumes rise over the ranks.

The men of Setia came, whose wine is reserved for Bacchus' cups,

[7] Named "chaste" here as the avenger of chaste Lucretia, raped by Tarquin.
[8] Catillus was the son of Amphiaraus, one of the legendary founders of Tibur.

also the men from Velitrae's famous valley floor and Cora's troops
and Signia's, whose foaming wine is bitter to taste, were sent -
the denizens too of the Pomptine marshes, rich in pestilence,
where the misty bogs of Satura invade the land, and the dark
and turbulent flow of Ufens drives its flood through pastures unkempt,
infecting the darkling plains with noisome slime -
their leader Scaevola, a man of mighty ancestors and a credit
to them, upon whose shield was inscribed with an honoured
image of that dread deed of bravery[9]. The flames were ablaze
on the altar stones while Mucius stood in the midst of the Tuscan camp, and
vented his rage upon himself, and his savage virtue was depicted there: Porsena
was depicted too shattered by the scene which made him abandon the war to
flee Scaevola's burning hand.

The men who till the ridge of Formiae and Anxur's stony steeps,
the Hernicans who turn their rocky soils with the plough set deep,
and those by whom are farmed Anagnia's rich and fertile tilth,
these Sulla led in company with the men of Ferentium and troops
enlisted also from Privernum; here too the fighting youth of Sora,
their arms aglitter. And here were the young warriors of Scaptia,
and a throng from Fabrateria; nor, descending from its snowy peak,
did Atina fail to show nor Suessa, worn down by war, nor Frusino
inured to the labours of battle from hard work behind the plough.
Next Arpinum's men, who live beside the Liris' stream that blends
its sulphurous waters with Fibrenus and flows with silent fall
quite down to the sea, were moved to arm as allies, and with them
the rugged youth aroused from both Venafrum and Larinum,
which drained the mighty city of Aquinum of its warriors.
Their bronze clad cavalry was hurled into the fray by Tullius,
descended from kings, and of the bloodline of Tullus of old.
A young man Tullius of such great character, about to bequeath
to the peoples of Rome such a great and immortal citizen![10]
That man's rhetoric will fill the lands beyond the Ganges
and the folk of India. The thunder of his speeches will defuse
the frenzied wars of Catiline and Antony and he will leave
a reputation for eloquence that none could ever hope to match.

And see! Nero dashes forth, of the Spartan line of Clausus,
a man quite unequalled in speedy deeds of daring done.
A troop from Amiterna keeps him company, and from Casperia
which takes its name from Bactra, and from Foruli and Reate,
kept sacred to the mighty Mother of gods, and Nursia, held
in the grip of perennial frost, troops too from the crags of Tetricus.
Armed all of these with the spear and rounded shield, their helms
unplumed, with their greaves worn on the left leg alone.
They marched and some joyfully sang a song of Sancus,
the founder of their race, others hymned your praise,
yes, Sabus, who first gave the name derived from yours
to the lands and the wide domain of the Sabine race.

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[9] See Duff's note *ad loc*, 'Mucius Scaevola, having failed to stab Lars Porsena, burnt his own hand in the fire; and his action made the invader retreat from Rome.'

[10] The orator M. Tullius Cicero, whose home town was Arpinum.

And see! Here is Curio, his horse-hair plume erect,
and bristling in scale armour, urging on Picenum' s men,
a battalion come to war! The waves are not so numerous
upon the ragged and conflicted sea amidst the creaming foam,
nor was her host less dense when the warrior maiden[11],
with shield of crescent shape, reviews her countless troops
in mimic war and shakes the ground and Thermodon's stream[12].
Here too one could see the men whom nurtures the soil
of rugged Numana, and those for whom the maritime altars
of Cupra smoke, and those who guard the riverside forts
of Truentum. Their ranks of shields beneath the coruscating sun
reflect the bloodied and shimmering light against the clouds.
Here stands Ancon, as famous for its purple dyes as those
of Sidon and of Libya; here too stood Hadria, a town supplied
with water by Vomanus, and leafy Asculum's fearsome vexillarii[13].
Upon a time one Picus, son of mighty Saturn, founded Asculum,
a man whose human shape and form the spells of Circe stole,
who ordered him to fly throughout the skies above, while she
decorated his wings, as he fled, with the glories of saffron hue.
Before, according to myth, the land was occupied by Pelasgians,
whose king was Aesis who gave his name to the river there
and named his people after himself and called them Asili.

Nor did the rural men of Umbria bring any lesser armaments,
when they came, arriving from their hills and valley floors.
These men are watered by the rivers Aesis and the Sapis, also
Metaurus, whose turbulent stream plunges and winds its way through its rocky
bed from its lofty resounding source,
and Clitumnus bathes sacred bulls in its consecrated stream,
while Nar's tributary waters white bustle into the Tiber's flow,
along with the Tinia's stream, a stranger quite to fame of any kind,
the Clanis too and Rubicon and Sena's stream, Senones named.
But father Tiber flows with massive stream throughout the midst
of all, his migrant banks encroaching on the cities' walls.
For here is Umbrian Arna and Mevania, rich in pastureland,
Hispellum too and Narnia, reclining on its rough and rocky mount,
and Iguvium, cursed upon a time by unhealthy and miasmic mists,
while Fulginia lies unfortified across the spreading plains.
Strong forces from there – Amerians and Camertes - famed alike
for war and husbandry, and, accompanying these, Sassina's men,
so rich in dairy, and the men of Tuder, ever cultivating Mars.
One Piso led these men, who were contemptuous of death, his face
a boy's and beautiful, but endowed with a wisdom and wit
beyond his years, and the equal at least of any elder sage.
In front of the very first ranks he shone, his armour multi-coloured,
as blazing jewels glitter on the golden torque of a Parthian king.

And now, see, a legion made up of Etruscan troops, who looked

[11] Penthesileia, legendary queen of the Amazons.
[12] The Thermodon was a river in Amazonian territory that flowed into the Black Sea.
[13] Standard – bearers.

to Galba as their general, a man of a splendid name and line,
a line that sprang from Minos and from Pasiphaë, once raped
by the bull, which generated rank on rank of famous ancestors.
The pick of them were sent by Caere and Cortona, home
of Tarchon the proud, and by the ancient town of Graviscae.
A detachment too from Alsium, beloved of Argive Halaesus,
and from Fregenae, surrounded by its unkempt and untilled plain.
And Faesula was present too, whose folk interpreted the signs
of heaven's winged thunderbolt, along with Clusium, her men
a threat of old to Roman walls, when Lars Porsena the Great
demanded in vain that Rome obey the tyrants they had expelled.
Next Luna despatched a contingent from her marble mines,
a town famed for its incomparable port that harbours ships
beyond count, and keeps at bay the dangerous sea.
Vetulonia too, erstwhile the pride of the Tuscan race,
the town that first provided the bundled rods that went
before the consul, and axes as well of implicit threat.
As well she beautified the lofty curule thrones with ivory,
was the first to tint the toga's edge with Tyrian dye, and first
aroused her warriors to war with the trumpet's brazen blare.
Alongside these a cohort from Nepete and the Aequi of Falerium,
your people too, Flavina, and the men who live their lives
beside Sabatia's and Ciminus' standing lakes, along with the neighbouring folk
who frequent the town of Sutrium,
Soracte too, Apollo's sacred mount. Each soldier hefts
two spears. A wild leather pelt protects their heads,
while javelin armed they despised the Lycians' bows.

These soldiers knew the ways of war: the Marsi, though,
were adept both at war and the charming of snakes to sleep
with song, could assuage the viper's venomous strike
with incantation and herbs. Men say Angitia[14], Aeetes' girl,
both pioneered and taught the use of medicinal plants,
tamed snakes by the handling of them, called down the moon
from the sky, reined in the strident flow of rivers, summoned
the forests and so denuded of trees the mountain sides.
A settler, himself a source of dread, gave his name to these folk,
one Marsyas, who fled across the sea to Phrygian Crenai,
where once Apollo's lyre defeated his Mygdonian[15] pipe.
Marruvium, made famous by the name of ancient Marrus,
is their capital city, while further inland is situated Alba midst
its riverside and watered fields, fresh fruit its produce not grain.
Their other strongholds lack fame and have no popular name,
but yet are numerous and powerful. Pelignus was eager to join,
and summoned at once its troops from Sulmo's chilly clime.

No less enthusiastic are the soldiers of Sidicinum, whose home
is Cales: the founder of Cales was a distinguished hero named
Calais, nurtured he in a Thracian cave by Erechtheus' child

[14] A sister of Circe and similarly endowed with magical powers.
[15] Phrygian. Marsyas challenged Apollo to a musical contest and was defeated. In some versions of the myth he was flayed alive by Apollo for his temerity.

Ortygia, when snatched away by Boreas' wandering breeze.
No less a force in warfare were the young men of Vestina
who swelled the ranks, made tough by hunting wild beasts.
Their cattle graze your steeps, Fiscellus, and Pinna's green
fields, also Aveia's quick regenerating pasture lands.
Came too the Marrucini, fierce rivals to the Frentani,
and brought in their train Corfinium's men and great Teate.
They all bring spears to the fray[16], all carried slings with which
they used to bring down high flying birds. Skins flayed
from bears dispatched by the hunters covered their breasts.

Campania, rich in wealth and rich in land, despatched to war
from her wide domain a company of Oscan men. Hard by in camp
these Oscans waited and watched for their generals to come. Sinuessa leaves its
hot springs and Volturnum the sound of the sea,
Amyclae too, destroyed by silence once[17] and Fundi came
and Caieta ruled in ages past by Lamus and Antiphates' home, embraced by
the sea, Liternum of the standing pools as well,
along with Cyme, a place that prophesied what was to come[18].
Represented there too were Gaurus and Nuceria, while the sons
of Dicaearchus were sent from their harbour town[19]. Parthenope[20]
once founded by Greeks was there with its troops and Nola, barred
to Hannibal[21], and Allifae and Acerrae, plaything of the Clanius.
You could also see the Sarrastian men and the total might of Sarnus'
gentle stream. There too the chosen men from Phlegraean bays
so rich in sulphur, from Misenus too and Baiae with its great
red-hot crater mouth, named for Baius, Odysseus' companion.
Nor was Prochyte absent, nor Inarime, the appointed fiery home
of Typhoeus, nor yet the rocky isle of Telo, ancient of days,
nor Caletia's town with its small and humble battlements.
Surrentum was there and Abella, ill supplied with wheaten fields.
And Capua amongst the foremost there, but incapable sadly
in prosperous times of moderation, damned to destruction[22]by pride.

The Campanians rejoiced in their leader Scipio[23] as he trained
them for war, arming their warriors with javelins, fitting them out
with corselets of iron. At home they carried lighter arms
as was their ancestors' way, spears made of wood, no metal points, but
hardened in fire. They wielded the club and double bladed axe as well befitted
country-folk. And among their ranks their leader, Scipio,
gave imposing evidence of glory yet to come, by hurling paling

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[16] The *sparus*, a small javelin with a curved blade.
[17] Duff's note *ad loc.* 'This applies not to a Campanian city but to the mother-city, Amyclae in Laconia. After many false alarms, they passed a law that no one should mention the subject of invasion. Hence, when the Spartans came, no one dared announce their approach, and the town was taken (about 800 B.C.).'
[18] Cyme is the Greek name for Cumae, home of the prophetic Sibyl in Vergil's *Aeneid* 6.
[19] Puteoli.
[20] Naples.
[21] In 215 BC Hannibal was drive from the walls of Nola.
[22] Capua allied herself to Hannibal and was taken back by Rome in 211B.C.
[23] Later the victorious Africanus.

posts and crossing city moats at a single bound and breasted his way through
the breaking waves while armour clad. His displays
of prowess shown before the rank and file were consummate.
He often overtook, ran down on foot the bleeding horse
urged on by bloody spurs to speed and fly across the plains.
Erect and proud he often threw both rock and heavy javelin far beyond the
confines of the camp. He wore the brow of Mars
and flowing locks bedecked his head both front and rear.
His eyes had inner fires that yet burned with a gentle flame,
and all that looked on him were struck with delight and awe.

The Samnites too were present, not yet inclined to join the foe,
nor yet as yet inclined to forgive and forget their ancient enmity[24]:
They reap the fields of Batulum and Nucrae, hunt too the brakes
of Bovianum, men whose homes are close by the Caudine Forks[25],
and those despatched by Rufrae or Aesernia, and sent as well
by little known Herdonia from her neglected and untilled lands.

No less in spirit the Bruttii and the youth enrolled from the hills
of Lucania along with the Hirpini, their ranks all bristled
with spears, were shaggy wearing of the skins of wild beasts
for warmth. They live by hunting, inhabiting the woods and slake
their thirst with the river's stream, earn their sleep by hard work.

Add to these the men of Calabria and a contingent from Sallentia,
and from Brundisium, the southern tip of Italy's peninsula.
These troops were placed under the command of bold Cethegus.
He mustered their united strength for review, not split into separate
groups. Soldiers from the crags of Leucosia showed themselves
and the forces too which were sent from Paestum and Picentia,
along with the men of Cerillae, soon to be depopulated by the war,
men nurtured by the waters of Silarus were there, whose flood,
men say, will petrify the wood of branches soaked in it.
Cethegus praised both the sickle-shaped swords of the bellicose
Salerni and their rough hewn clubs made of unfinished oak
which the warriors of Buxentum grasped tight in their hands,
while he himself, bare armed in the manner of his ancestors,
took delight in his difficult steed, exercising the strength
of his youth to wheel in circles his hard mouthed war horse.

You too, the sorely depleted tribes of the valley of the Po[26],
although no deity attended to your prayers in former days,
once more rushed forth to battle and yet more catastrophe.
Placentia, shaken to the core by war vied with Mutina's efforts,
and Mantua rivalled Cremona in sending out its youthful force,
Mantua, home of the Muses, raised to the stars by Vergil's fame,
a city to rival itself illustrious Homer's Smyrnaean[27] renown.

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[24] See Duff's note *ad loc.* 'A Sabine people, inveterate enemies of Rome in her early history: after Cannae they joined Hannibal.'
[25] The site of a defeat inflicted on the Romans by the Samnites in 321 B.C.
[26] The inhabitants of the Po valley had suffered severely at the hands of Hannibal on his first entry into Italy.

Verona too was there, a city round which flowed the stream
of Athesis, and Faventia, skilled in fostering its ubiquitous pine.
Vercellae came with Pollentia, rich in dusky woollen fleece,
Bononia[28] too, of the lesser Rhine, the ancient home of Ocnus,
a sometime ally of Aeneas in his war against Laurentum.
Also Ravenna's men, who slowly plough their languid waterways,
negotiate their marshland stagnant meres with weighty oars.
A band next of ancient Trojan stock, men from Patavium,
once home of the Euganei, cast from their sacred land by Antenor.
Venetia and Aquileia too were overfilled with multitudes of troops.
The nimble Ligurians came, the Vagenni too from rocky haunts
sent hardy sons to swell still more the fame of Hannibal.
Their leader, Brutus, a man in whom they placed the greatest trust,
whose eloquence fired their hearts against a foe experienced before.
His dignity wore a cheerful face, his intellect aroused a warm
response, his virtue unencumbered by gloom. He had no truck
with empty praises won for pig-headedness and a melancholy brow,
nor sought he base notoriety through a sinister style of life.

Three thousand expert archers had been sent to the war
from Hiero, the loyal sovereign from Etna's mount in Sicily.
A lesser number was sent from Elba's isle, all eager though
to wear their swords of native iron, the veritable nurse of war.

A witness of this vast array of weaponry might have excused
the passion embraced by Varro to commit himself to the fray.
When great Mycenae once invaded Troy, Leander's Hellespont
beheld a thousand ships, just such a massive force as that
foregathers its seething host upon the littoral of Rhoeteum.

And when they came to Cannae's field, site of an ancient town,
they fixed their fated standards on a palisade that boded ill.
Nor did the gods above refrain from making known the calamity
to come, when imminent disaster threatened their wretched force.
Of a sudden javelins blazed incandescent amidst the startled ranks,
and towering ramparts fell in ruins along the line of battlements,
while Garganus' tottering peak collapsed to flatten forest stands
of trees, and in its innermost depths Aufidus rumbled, roared -
far distant the mountains of Epirus flared across the vast
sea's depths to put the fear of god in superstitious mariners.
Calabrian sailors sought in vain for Sipus' harbour and shore
when daylight was suddenly lost amidst shadows huge and dark;
screech owls lay frequent siege to the gates of the force's camp.
Dense swarms of bees enclosed the eagle standards to horrify
the men at arms, while shining comet tails, long harbingers
of overthrow for kings, glowed a lethal red in the evening sky.
In the dark night's silent depths wild beasts broke through
the battlements to snatch away a guard before the startled gaze
of his companions hard by, to scatter his limbs across the plain.

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[27] See Duff, *ad loc.* 'Mantua was the birthplace of Vergil, for whom Silius had a special devotion. Smyrna was one of the seven cities which claimed tot be the birthplace of Homer.'
[28] Modern Bologna.

Men's sleep was even mocked by images that horrified:
the ghosts of Gauls appeared exploding from their graves;
three, four times the Tarpeian rock was shaken to its roots
and base and a river of dark blood flowed in the shrines
of Jupiter, a torrent of tears poured in an abundant flood
from the face of father Quirinus' ancient effigy.
The Allia swelled and rose to overflow its fatal banks[29].
The very Alps themselves did move, while day and night
the Apennines were never still amidst their valleys vast.
From the southern sky from Libya came flaming meteors to fall
on Italy, while the heavens were rent with an horrendous crash,
and the visage of the Thunderer was there revealed.
Vesuvius gave thunderous tongue and hurled fires to match
the flames of Etna from its beetling crags, while the fiery peak
shot bombs of rock skyward to threaten the stars themselves.

And see, in the army's midst a soldier foretells the course
of battle, his tongue and senses overwhelmed, he fills the camp
with strident cries, gasps out, reveals the tragedy to come,
"Immortals, cruel gods! I beg you, spare us! This plain is not
sufficient for the piles of dead. I see the general from Africa
as he flies through the serried ranks and speeds his chariot
across dead men and weaponry alike, our standards in his wake.
A windstorm rages with blast insane to spin the battlefield dust
into our mouths and eyes. Servilius falls, quite careless of life,
his absence from the field of Trasimene now meaningless.
And where does Varro flee? By Jupiter! Paulus is felled
by a blow from a stone, the final hope of an army in despair.
The butcher's bill at Trebia seems trivial! Behold, a bridge is built
from the bodies of fallen men, and steaming Aufidus belches out
the dead, and the elephant bestrides the battlefield victorious.
The Carthaginian apes our customs, the consul's axe in hand,
his lictor carrying the bundle of blood stained rods of office.
The Roman triumphal procession is expropriate to Libya.
Such grief! You demand that we witness this, immortal gods?
Victorious Carthage weighs the measure of Rome's defeat
in golden rings extracted from the fingers of the Roman dead."[30]

[29] The Allia was the scene of a dreadful defeat suffered by Rome at the hands of the Gauls on the 18th of July 390 B.C. a *dies nefastus.* See Livy, 5.37-39; 6.1.

[30] See Duff, note *ad loc.* 'To prove the greatness of his victory, Hannibal sent home the gold rings taken from the corpses of the Roman nobles: these were poured out in the Carthaginian senate, and filled three peck-measures, according to some authorities (Livy, xxiii. 12.1).'

Punica: Book 9

Silius Italicus

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Book 9

Varro is eager for battle, especially after success in a minor action. Paulus is unable to hold Varro's enthusiasm in check (1-65). *A terrible crime committed unwittingly during the night is a bad omen for Rome's success in the coming battle* (66-177). *Hannibal exhorts his men and draws up his line of battle* (178-243). *Varro does the same* (244-277). *The battle of Cannae itself* (278 – Bk. 10. 325).

Though Latium was traumatized by portents such as these and the gods
revealed vain warnings of impending doom throughout the length of Italy,
it was as if the omens and the signs were good and heralded fortunes fair
for Rome in the battle to come. For Varro, the consul, spent an insomniac
night, brandishing in his hand his javelin in the shadows and the dark.
He ranted now at Paulus for his lack of action, and wanted *now* to sound
the trumpets of war and give full tongue to the battle signal in the night.
No less did Hannibal hanker in his heart for an urgent start to hostilities.
A contingent of our force, inspired by an evil whim, broke out from camp
in violence. A band of the Macae[1] were scattered and foraging for food
on the neighbouring plain. They fired a cloud of speeding shafts upon
our men. Mancinus, rejoicing in being the first of our force to engage
the foe in battle and in being the first to stain with hostile blood the point
of his spear, fell dead. And with him perished too a number of troops.
Though Paulus had declared the entrails and the omens of the gods
to be adverse, still Varro could not have contained his lust for war,
had not the quotidian change of command which prevailed in the camp
denied him arbitrary power to fight, as he rushed headlong to his doom.
And yet this custom could not reprieve the host from death for more
than a single day. The soldiers returned to the camp and Paulus grieved
no doubt because he saw supreme command would devolve upon
the morrow on a lunatic, and that he had saved his men's lives
in vain from slaughter that day. For Varro, rampant with rage,
and infuriated by Paulus' delays and the suspension of hostilities,
declared, "Is this the way you, Paulus, repay your debt of gratitude?
I saved your life! Did the men deserve this who snatched you from
the penalties at law and a verdict that threatened consequences dire?
Command our men, rather, to give to the foe the weapons recalled
from the battle! Seize them yourself from their good right hands!
You, though, whose eyes I saw bedew your cheeks with tears,
when your consul told you turn your backs in shameful retreat,
do not attend on custom and the sought after signal for war.
Each man appoint himself as his leader and charge, when first
the sun begins to spread its rays upon the peak of Garganus!
I will throw wide the gates myself: then let all make great haste
to redeem the day that was wasted today." And so in his madness
he tried to inflame in his ailing troops a baneful passion for war.

However, Paulus' mindset and language now suffered a sea change:
he stood as he had stood after the battle before, the plain quite strewn
with his beaten army's dead, the disaster to come impressing itself

[1] An African tribe that dwelled near the river Cinyps.

upon his sight and inner eye; just as, all hope of resurrection gone,
the mother, stunned senseless, to no purpose now enfolds her son's
limbs, warm still, in one last and final quite hopeless embrace,
"By Rome's city walls so frequently shaken," he said, "and by those
lives, innocent still and round which the shadow of death hovers now,
restrain yourself, do not go forward to meet this disaster head on.
So long as the gods' hostility pertains and until Fortuna's rage is spent,
let it suffice that our troops can bear to hear the name of Hannibal,
and hearing his name look upon that foe and not turn cold with fear.
Why, surely you see when his name is heard on the plains how the blood
of a sudden will drain from their faces to render those visages pale,
how weapons fall from nerveless hands at the trumpets' blast? You think
of Fabius as a weakling dawdler! Yet the men you castigate he led
beneath his standards, they take up their arms once more to fight,
yet those Flaminius … but gods abort such words of portentous ill!
But even if your heart rejects my advice and the prayers that I make,
unlock your ears to the god! The prophetic priestess and Sibyl
of Cumae once sang out this warning long ago to all the world,
in the time of your forebears, a song of you and your insanity.
And now a second prophet and yet with no riddling song to sing
I openly proclaim your fate: unless tomorrow you hold back
the standards, you will write in our own blood the prophecy sung
by Phoebus' Sibyl, nor shall this battle ground be infamous through
Diomedes the Greek, but through you, a consul of Rome, if you persist."
So Paulus spoke and the tears sprang forth from his fevered eyes.

That night in turn was fouled by a monstrous and unintended crime.
One Satricus, captured by Xanthippus, had endured the life of a slave
in Africa, but presently was handed over to the king of the Autololes
as part of the booty granted him in reward for his virtuous services[2].
This man's home was Sulmo where he had left two infant sons
at their mother's breasts – Mancinus and with him one Solimus,
a Trojan name; for their ancestry was Trojan, sprung from a man,
a follower of Aeneas' royal staff, who became a founder himself
of the walls and famous eponymous town of Solimon. In time
and *gradatim* the name of the town was shortened and reduced
to Sulmo, a place frequented and much settled by Italians.
Now Satricus had been brought along with his king and foreign troops
to be used and valued when need arose to interpret for the Africans
the Latin tongue and so the opportunity arose to chance a visit again
to Peligna to see his father's house. And so he summoned night
to cover his attempt and secretly fled from the camp he loathed.
He carried no arms on his person in case the hefting of a shield
betrayed his design and he made for home no sword in his hand.
And so he wandered the field amidst the spoils and littered dead
and girded himself with weapons taken from Mancinus' corpse.
And so his fear grew less – and yet the bloodless body from which
he had plundered these arms, the corpse whose limbs he had despoiled
was that of his son, not long before laid low by an African foe.

[2] See, Bk. 6. 302ff.

At the advent of night and the time for sleeping his other son,
still wide awake made his way outside the Italian camp, Solimus
his name, to relieve in turn those keeping watch at night
outside the gates, and he began to search for his brother's corpse,
Mancinus' corpse, as it lay prostrate among the scattered dead -
his wish to place the poor boy's wretched corpse beneath the earth.
Not far into his hasty journey he spotted a man, an armed man
and an enemy, who was coming from the Carthaginian camp.
He took shelter and hid his limbs behind a tomb, an Aetolian tomb
of one Thoas, which sudden Fate had put unexpected in his way.
Next, when he realized the man was walking alone in the dark,
he leapt out from the tomb to hurl his javelin at his father's back,
all unprotected as it was, with deadly aim. Then Satricus thought
his wound was made by a Carthaginian hand and looked around
to see if there was a Carthaginian force in hot pursuit of him.
He sought to see the hidden author of this unexpected blow.

However, when Solimus' youthful energy brought him nearby
as he charged, victorious, a dull reflection of light from the arms
he knew so well revealed his brother's shield, and the moonlight
betrayed it before his eyes, as it gleamed there close beside him.
Then the youth, inflamed by a sudden burst of rage, exclaimed,
"No scion of the house of Satricus, nor no native son of Sulmo,
nor brother, Mancinus, of yours, nor yet could I claim to be
descended worthily from Trojan Solimus, should I allow this man
to 'scape my hands unpunished! And shall you wear before my eyes
my brother's noble arms and carry off, you wretch, these splendid spoils,
purloined from a proud Pelignian house, while I still live and breathe?
I will bring these arms, dear mother Acca, to you, to ease your grief
and as gifts to fix upon my brother's tomb, an enduring *in memoriam*."
He shouted these words and rushed to attack, his sword unsheathed.

Already though and slowly his weapons were slipping from his hands,
when he heard the names of Sulmo, his wife and sons and their arms
named, chill fear seized then both limbs and senses, stupefying them,
as from his mouth a pitiful message emerged as of a man but half alive,
"I pray you, stay and spare your hand, my son, not so that I might live,
(to live and love life now must be a crime) but so you may not stain
that hand with a father's blood. A prisoner once of Carthage, I now
return to my native shores for the first time since: my name is Satricus,
the son of Solimus. No criminal charge, my son, attaches to you:
when in your fervid rage you hurled your spear at me I was, you thought,
a Carthaginian, but I had in truth escaped that hateful camp to seek
in haste the sight of you, my sons, and my lovely wife's dear face.
I stole this shield from a corpse; and so, my one and only surviving son,
carry back these arms, now purged of guilt[3], to your brother's tomb.
But let your prime concern, my son, be to take intelligence back
to Paulus, the general, and insist that he strive to prolong the war
and deny the Carthaginian the chance to risk all on the battlefield.
For Hannibal is delighted by the auguries and expects to make

[3] The phrase 'now purged of guilt' is taken from Duff's translation.

a mighty killing in the imminent clash. Restrain, I beg of you,
the madness of Varro. Rumour has it he will drive his troops to fight.
Sufficient this my solace at the tipping point of a wretched life,
that I have warned my countrymen. Now grant, my son, at once
both found and lost, a final kiss." With this he flung his helmet off
and with trembling limbs embraced his son, who was quite petrified,
attempting in his care for him to purge with words the felt shame
of the wound inflicted and to make excuses for the javelin cast,
"Is any witness present here who knows what we have done?
Has not the night with darkling shade concealed our mistake?
Why tremble so? Son, clasp me closer, closer to your breast.
Your very father pardons your attack and begs that you now close
at his labour's end your father's eyes with that same right hand."
The wretched youth heaved sighs from deep within, no voice
nor words could find for reply. He hastened, though, to staunch
the dark flow of blood and quickly bind up the deep wound.
with cloth which he tore from his own cloak as his tears overflowed.
At last from out the gut wrenching groans this complaint,
"Is this the way, my father, that Fortune brings you home
to us? Her impiety brings together both father and son in such
a fateful way! My brother was three, four times more fortunate
than I, my brother whose death denied him recognition of his sire!
But I, unscathed by the Carthaginian foe – behold! - now recognize
my father and have wounded him. At least, Fortuna, you might
have allowed to me the simple solace of not presenting me
with proof so positive of our ill fated kinship, but the gods,
unjust, will have no chance to conceal our house's sufferings."

Then while the son, demented, grieved for his own and his father's fate,
his sire through loss of blood expelled his soul to the vacant winds.
And then the young man raised his tear stained face to the stars and cried,
"Moon's light that witnessed the unspeakable crime that was wrought
by my right hand, polluted now, the crime that in the dark of night
had you speed my spear to penetrate my father's body, no more will you
be made unclean by the sight of these mine eyes and my accursed face!"
With these final words he pierced his chest with his sword and blocked
the wound to write with his own pulsing blood upon his shield
his father's words of stern command, "Be wary of battle, Varro!'
He hung his shield on the topmost point of his spear and spread
his limbs across his father's corpse for whom he mourned so bitterly.

The gods were sending the men of Rome such omens of the fight to come.
And little by little the night, the witness of this dread crime, gave way
to rosy fingered dawn as the shadows of the night began to depart.
The Roman and the Carthaginian generals called their men to arms
in customary style. And a day then dawned for the men of Carthage
the like of which would never be seen again in the whole of time.
"You have no need of words to urge you on," then Hannibal declared,
"for you have traversed victorious the lands between Gibraltar's rock
and the fields of Italy. Brave Saguntum is nowhere now to be seen.
The Alps did yield to you! The proud father of Italy's rivers himself,
the Po, now flows down to the sea in a bed made captive by us.

The Trebia is choked with Roman dead and Flaminius' corpse
lies buried beneath the weight of Etruscan soil, while the plains,
no longer turned by the plough, glow white with Roman bones.
Fame greater than this is at hand! A new day dawns to bring
a greater prize of blood! Such fame is sufficient and much more
than sufficient to pay me back for the toils of war: spoils more
than these are garnered, though, for you. Whatever booty Rome
brought down the rich Hiberus, or won in her Sicilian victories,
or stored as plunder snatched from the shores of Africa itself,
will be the prizes won by your swords and with no lots cast.
Take home whatever your sword hand wins. Your general seeks
no reputation won through wealth. The Trojan robber[4] will have
through centuries conquered and despoiled the world for you.
You men born of Tyrian and Phoenician stock to you I grant
a choice, should perhaps Laurentum's pastures please your eye,
now tilled by Roman hands, or rather the fields around Byzacium[5],
where a single ear of wheat when sown will yield one hundred fold.
I will grant you the chance to choose as your prize the land best loved.
I will also add the land which is watered by the yellow Tiber's stream,
where graze the banks far and wide the captured cattle beasts and sheep.
As for my allies sprung from foreign blood who fight in the ranks
of Carthage, if you lift a hand that is stained red with Roman blood,
from that day forth a citizen of Cartage you will immediately be!
And do not be deceived by the sight of Garganus and Apulia:
you stand before the walls of Rome. The city may be distant still
and far removed from the site of our impending battle here.
Yet she will crash this day, this place! And nevermore shall I call
you soldiers to battle again. The battle won, then seek the Capitol!"

Thus Hannibal spoke: they dropped the defensive ramparts then
across the ditch to despatch delay and the general drew up his troops
in ordered line of battle to match the contours of the river's banks.
The barbarous Nasamonian host took their place on the left, prepared
for war, with them the Marmaridae, monstrous their stature and limbs,
and then ferocious Moors and the Garamantian horde and the Macae:
Massylian warriors next, and a crowd of Adrymachidae who love
to live by the sword and live as neighbours to the Nile, whose skin
is ever burned black by the pitiless heat of their merciless sun.
in his place at the head of these troops Nealces stood as general.
However, on the right, where Aufidus curves his winding stream
and the waters eddy and swirl beneath and around their banks,
lord Mago ruled. And here in support the light armed troops sent
from the harsh Pyrenees. With polyglot voice these people matched
the river's roar. Their young men's crescent shields shone in the sun.
In front of all the Cantabrians and Vascones bare of head, alongside
Balearic slingers that join in battle with leaden slugs, and the sons
of Baetis too, while Hannibal himself, mounted on high, took charge
of the middle ground, consolidated by his father's veterans from home
and troops of Gauls, their company often washed in Eridanus' flood.

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[4] Rome, founded by Trojan Aeneas.
[5] According to Duff (note *ad loc.*) ' A district in Africa near the Lesser Syrtis, of fabulous fertility'.

However, where the river backed water with wavering flood and gave
no protection at all to his wedged formations of men, there elephants
carried on high their massy towers and ramparts upon their backs
of black and grey. Like to mobile fortifications they were that swayed
and teetered, lifting their vertical stronghold to reach for the sky.
And finally the men of Numidia were granted a roving commission,
to circle the field at will and hotly engage the enemy across the plain.

While Hannibal disposed his fiery forces, he harangued them nonstop,
again and again, his urgent voice quite indefatigable, inspiring them
with memories of past achievements and boasting that he knew himself
which individual hand had hurled the hiss and rush of every javelin,
and promised he would, without fail, witness be to each of their deeds.
Now Varro began the train of disaster, moving out his legion's force
from the camp – and on his pallid flood the Ferryman rejoiced to free
his benches for the spirits of the dead about to descend.
Stock still stand the front ranks, forbidden to move by the words
in blood on the shield lifted high, unstrung, cast down by the omen.
Horrendous the picture before them: the pitiful corpses lay wrapped
in mutual embrace. The son, collapsed across his father's breast,
lay there and concealed with his right hand his father's fatal wound.
Many tears were shed, while grief for Mancinus' death was renewed
then by his brother's fate. The gloomy portent gave them pause,
as did the family resemblances clear between the coupled dead.
They very soon proclaimed the unintended crime and woeful deeds
to Varro, told too of the messaged shield that forbad the fray.
But he, incensed, declared, "Pray take these omens to Paulus, friends!
His static and fearful and womanish heart and soul may well
be moved by this son's parricidal and infamous hand, which when
the Furies came to seek revenge, composed this criminal curse,
as fearful death approached perhaps, writ large in his father's blood."

He hastily disposed his troops for battle then in minatory tones:
where savage Nealces directed his line of fierce barbarian tribes,
he stationed there himself in opposition with his Marsian force
and Samnite standards, and the native born levy from Apulia.
In the centre of the field where he saw that Hannibal had his place,
Servilius was ordered to march against the armoured foe and take
along with him and his troops the men of Picenum and of Umbria,
while Paulus commanded the right wing and the combatants there.
As well the task of dealing with the forays of flying Numidian horse
was handed to Scipio. Varro's instruction to him was to despatch
his men wherever the foe with skill and guile divided his ranks.

And now the rival armies closed and there spread through the host
of agile manoeuvring men, through the whinnying neighs of hot
breathed horse and the resounding din of clashing weaponry a sound,
an indeterminate sound, pervading all the mingled rank and file,
as when the winds first move to storm and do battle on the deep,
when the sea gives birth to its latent rage and tempests that scour
the stars, when *de profundis* the waters, threatening, roar and rise
to churn and eddy, thundering to threaten the rocky shore, expelled

from its caves to torture the gasping, foaming whirlpool of waves.

Nor was this savage chaos of fate and conflicting wills confined
to earth alone. For discord and madness invaded the realms
of heaven itself and forced the very gods to internecine strife.
On the Roman side fought Mars and with Mars, Apollo by his side,
and Neptune, master of the stormy sea. Grieving Venus too,
and Vesta, along with Amphitryon's son[6], stung by the deaths
at the siege of Saguntum, and blessed Cybele, with autochthonous
Italian gods, so rustic Faunus and the father, Quirinus, and Pollux,
who shares life's breath with Castor each six months in exchange.
Opposing them was Saturn's daughter Juno, a sword at her waist,
and Pallas, who leapt from the Libyan waters of Lake Tritonis,
alongside Ammon, Africa's native god, with horns that curved
about his temples, and further a massive tribe of minor deities.
As all together this host approached and the blessed earth herself
did shake beneath their tread. Some diverged to fill the hills
close by, while still others took their rest beneath a lofty cloud.
Their descent to earth to do battle had rendered heaven void.

A mighty clamour was lifted to the abandoned stars, as loud
as the cries the earthborn host had despatched to the sky upon
the plains of Phlegra, as loud as the voice with which lord Jove,
the universal sire, demanded further Cyclopean thunderbolts
when he saw ambitious Giants on the march to seize
from mountain piled on mount the very kingdom of the gods.
Nor was a single spear despatched the first within that huge
encounter: a strident storm of missiles simultaneous were sent
with contested fury, and here and now there men died in their lust
for blood, cut down by the double sided storm of weaponry.
And even before a frenzied sword was draw by crazed right hand,
a great portion of the warring host was down. In blind eagerness
men trampled on the very bodies of their own groaning friends.
The Roman positions were not to be dislodged or turned aside
by energetic troops from Africa, nor could the steadfast ranks
of Carthage more disrupted be than Calpe's mass be detached
from its storm impacted seat by the sea's eager swirl and crash.
Sword thrusts were foiled by lack of space nor was it possible
for close packed corpses to fall to the ground in crowded death.
Helmets clashed with hostile helmets, flashing fire, while shield
impacted on shattered shield and sword was broken on sword.
Foot pressed on foot and man on man. The ground could not
be seen, encrusted with blood. The heavens and stars were gone
from sight, purloined by night-dark clouds of missile 'neath the sky.
The men whom Fortune had stationed in the secondary rank
joined battle with lengthy spears and far-reaching pike,
and rivalled their confreres up front, as if themselves in the van.
And those at the last condemned to the third inglorious rank
strove to match their forward comrades' zeal with javelins thrown.
From the rear the din of voices raised waged war, and troops,

[6] Hercules.

ill fitted out for war, assailed the foe with savage imprecations.
No type of weapon was absent there: men fought with stakes,
or brandished burning brands, deployed the weighty javelin.
Still others hurled rocks, slung stones or the flying lance.
Now sibilant arrows hissed as they flashed through the clouds,
and fire bombs flung from catapults, the dread of city walls.

Can I ever hope, o goddesses[7] mine, whose rites as priest I celebrate,
to have the power with mere mortal voice to reveal to ages yet to come
the total story of that day? Do you gift me the faith to trust my tongue
to describe Cannae with one man's voice? And if my reputation is dear
to you, and you do not turn away your gaze from epic enterprise,
then summon all your powers of song and of father Phoebus himself.
But would that, Roman, you might endure in future to bear prosperity
with the self same spirit that you then endured defeat! Enough is quite
enough, and I pray the gods agree and do not choose to test if the men
of Rome can bear another such calamity. And do you, Roma, put aside
your fears, despite your fell anxiety, and bless those wounds so sure
to bear immortal praise for you. For you will never greater be in time
to come than on that day! Success in time shall be a source of frailty,
so you may look alone to your defeats to seal your famous reputation.

And shifting Fortune, favouring now one side and now another, played
contemptuous games with both the forces' fearsome energies, and long
time hung in the balance the hope of victory on the both of their sides,
while Mars' fires flared with equal vigour in each contesting force's hearts.
Just so the gentle breezes agitate the green corn blades this way and that,
while the wind gusts stir the ears of wheat, as yet unripe, upon the stalk,
and hither and yon the wheat tops ripple and, swaying by turns, they shine
and bend and, nodding, slowly dance and bow and then eddy in waves.
At length Nealces, attacking with piercing shouts and barbarian force,
breaks through the discipline of the Roman battle line and scatters it.
The close packed ranks were undone and through the widening gaps
the enemy rushed upon their fearful foe. Torrential blood did inundate
the field with darkling flood; no dead man's corpse that fell
was pierced by but a single shaft. Each warrior Roman was in dread
of wounds to the back and welcomed savage blows made to the breast
and so a glorious death kept foul disgrace and dishonour at bay.

Forever a lover of hazards dire and equal to each and every threat,
there stood in the van, in the battle's innermost part, a warrior,
one Scaevola. In the midst of butchery such as this he had no wish
to survive the slain, but rather to die a death worthy of his ancestor[8].
He, when he saw the battle was lost and the dreadful toll of death
increasing, said, "Our life is brief and what brief span is left I will
extend, for virtue is but a futile and empty name unless the time
of death and its manner can suffice to win glory for one's name!"
These were his words as he stormed enraged to the battle's midst,
where Hannibal's dynamic hand was clearing a path through the fray.
He stabbed a triumphant Caralis intent as he was on hanging high

[7] The Muses, the source of the inspiration of artists of every kind.
[8] See Bk. 8.383 ff.

on a tree the looted weapons ripped from his victim's corpse,
and raging Scaevola buried his sword to the hilt in Caralis' chest.
And Caralis fell and rolled and sought to bite the hostile dirt,
suppressing the deadly pangs of pain beneath him on the ground.
Nor could the frenzied hands and united bravery of Siccha and Gabar
together restrain the warrior, but fearsome Gabar lost his good
right hand as he stood firm and strong in the midst of the fight.
When Siccha, blinded by grief, headlong rushed to bring help,
he stood incautious and rash on the naked blade of a sword
to fall and measure his length beside the body of his dying friend,
too late lamenting the fact of his unshod and unprotected feet.
At last the young man's burgeoning rage attracted the fatal shafts
of Nealces, lightning-swift, and he leapt forward then to win
the prize of slaughter, passion fired by the status of his famous foe.
He seized a rock torn away from a cliff, transported from the hills
above by rushing streams, and furious hurled it into the face
of Scaevola. His teeth were smashed by the impact of the stone,
his warrior features torn away; a thick and bloody flux of gore
and brain descended through his nostrils, black matter flowed
from the sockets of his shattered eyes and his mutilated brow.
Then Marius was laid low as he tried to aid his soul-mate Caper:
he had dreaded to survive the death of his fallen warrior friend.
For they had shared the same birth day and mutual poverty both,
had shared their youthful studies in Praeneste's sacred town,
while the lands they tilled and worked were neighbouring fields.
Their likes and dislikes alike were the same in a meeting of two
harmonious minds, their friendship rich despite their modest means.
They died together. Of all the prayers they made Fortune allowed
but one, that they should die a soldier's death in battle side by side.
The arms of both became the prize of Symaethus, their conqueror.

But the men of Carthage were not for long permitted to enjoy
so great a gift of Fortune. For Scipio was there, his aspect full
of menace, but pitying the men who turned their backs in flight,
along with him was Varro, source of all misfortune, Curio too,
fair haired, and Brutus, descendant of the first consul of Rome.
Supported by such as these the army might have gained lost ground,
renewing its work, had not Hannibal himself with a sudden strike
arrested and then reined in their battalions as they now advanced.
And when from afar he saw the figure of Varro in the battle's midst,
and the lictors, all dressed in their scarlet tunics surrounding him,
"I recognize," he said, 'the consul Varro's retinue and his insignia!
Just so was Flaminius once!" Then seething he proclaimed his sharp
set rage by the thunder of his beating on his massive shield.
Poor wretched Varro, who could have equalled Paulus's death,
had not the anger of the gods despoiled him of his chance to fall
by Hannibal's hand. How often would Varro complain to the gods
because of the fact he had escaped destruction by Hannibal's sword!
For Scipio rushed to the fore to bring salvation in the face
of imminent death, and turned the threat from Varro onto his
own person. And though the prize of the superior kill was denied

him[9], Hannibal was not loath to exchange the consul for a mightier
foe, punishing Scipio for the rescue of his father on Ticinus' bank,
as at last the chance of a duel offered him the chance for revenge.
The two men raised poles apart in the world now took their stance,
men like no others in stature the earth had seen come together
before, two warriors well matched in their skills, although the man
of Rome excelled, by dint of honoured *pietas* the far superior.

Then Mars, fearful for Scipio, leapt down upon the battle field
from out a hollow cloud, as did Minerva, fearing too for Hannibal;
and at the advent of the gods both lines of battle shook with fear
themselves, though neither of the steadfast leaders showed a sign
of dread. Wherever Minerva bent her brazen front, fire flashed afar
from the Gorgon's mouth, the aegis serpent fringe hissed horribly.
Her blood-red eyes did burn so brightly that one thought that they
were tandem comets blazing, while the massive crest upon her helm's
high peak unrolled a tide of flames to reach and lap the stars.
Mars drove fierce blasts of air before him with threatening spear,
and overarching with his shield the plain he wore a breastplate,
a gift made by the Cyclopes, that issued Aetna's flames volcanic,
and rising with his golden plume he struck the very skies above.

Both human champions were on their battle bent, intent also
on what in conflict each might dare, yet understanding still
that the gods had come and bearing arms, and each rejoiced
the gods would witnesses be, which added an edge to their ire.
Minerva with her right strong hand did turn aside and deflect
a hard flung spear directed at Hannibal's Carthaginian breast,
while Mars, taught by the fearsome goddess' help to Hannibal,
himself did hand to Scipio a sword once forged in Aetna's fires
and urged him further on to do battle and to greater deeds.
The Maiden then, inflamed within, her savage face was suddenly
suffused with fire and, as she twisted her gaze to the side,
her tortured features quite outdid the Gorgon's countenance.
The shaking aegis caused its snakes to raise erect their horrid bulk,
while even Mars himself was made to withdraw from the fray
initially, step by step, because of her ferocious first assault.
With speedy effort then the goddess takes up a massive hunk
of rock, ripped out from the hill close by, and in her fury hurls
this massive boulder, stuck thick with bristling stones at Mars.
The sea shore shook at the din and far off Saso's isle was terrified.

This conflict had not escaped the note of the king of the gods,
who swiftly despatched below the goddess Iris, girt in clouds,
to rein in and check their excesses of rage, and he spoke these words,
"Go, goddess, now and glide down swiftly to the land of Italy and tell
Minerva to mitigate her horrid wrath against her brother, Mars,
and not to hope that she can change the laws set down by Fate.
and tell her also this – unless she stops (for I know of old the fire
within her heart and soul) and does not check that fire within,

[9] I.e. the slaughter of the opposing commander-in-chief.

she will learn how much my thunderbolt outweighs her aegis' power."

Minerva heard these words and for a time was unsure she should
obey and yield herself to the power of Jupiter's thunderbolt,
"I will abandon the field,' she said: "but will he alter destiny,
now that Minerva's routed? Or from his celestial seat can Jupiter
avoid the sight of the fields of Garganus with slaughter steam?"
So saying she picked up Hannibal in the midst of a hollow cloud,
transported him to a far flung part of the field, then left that place.

Black hearted Mars, on the goddess' return to the skies, recalled
his plans and, surrounded by a veil of cloud, with his great right hand
returned the Roman dead about the field to life and the bitter fray.
The risen men of Italy reversed their fallen standards and renewed
the killing now, while the enemy felt in turn the breath of dread.
Now Aeolus, the guardian of the winds, whose prison constrains
the force of all the winds that sweep the skies, the gusts of Eurus
and of Boreas, of both Caurus and Notus[10], obeys Minerva's pleas.
She had promised him a large reward, so he unleashed the lord
of the Aetolian plain, Vulturnus[11]upon the battlefield: it pleased
her for him to fulfil the needs of her implacable and raging soul.
Vulturnus first immersed himself in Aetna's incandescent pit,
accumulated fire from there, then lifted up a fiery countenance
to fly forth with howling force upon all of Daunus' lands,
propelling before himself a blinding cloud of aggregated dust.
The storm blast stole away the helpless Romans' hearing and sight;
the wind, a matter of tears to tell, hurled in their faces whorls
of superheated sand, and on divine demand waged crazed
and cheerful war. Then, in a mass of wholesale chaotic ruin,
men and arms and trumpets, all were strewn across the land;
spears, lances carried backward by the opposing storm,
each missile falling in vain behind their own battle line,
while that same blast accelerated the Carthaginian shafts,
the howling tempest aiding their flight, as if they were launched
with a thong, and stridently sped the Tyrian spears upon their way.
In the face of the choking dust the soldiers clamped shut their mouths
and, tight lipped, they grieved to suffer such an inglorious death.
Vulturnus himself, his yellow hair concealed in the inky dark,
and thickened, matted and stiff with a mass of ingrained sand,
attacks the retreating Romans from the rear on strident wings,
now charging in turn in full frontal assault in a clamour of storm,
to rattle their arms in their face and hiss at them with mouth agape.
And time and again the wind would foil their killing blow,
divert their hands from the wounding thrust, intent though they were
on battle and bringing their swords ever closer to enemy throats.
Nor was it enough to cause chaos throughout the Italian lines:
against even Mars he vomited forth his mix of din and tempest blast,
and twice made tremble the topmost helmet crest of the god of war.

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[10] These winds are the East wind, Eurus, the North, Boreas, the Nor westerly, Caurus and the Southerly, Notus.

[11] See Duff, *ad loc*, 'An E.S.E. wind that got up daily about the same hour: it blew the dust over the plains of Apulia and blinded the Romans.'

While the raging wind, released by Aeolus, waged war against
the troops of Rome and provoked the god of war himself to rage,
Minerva spoke to Jupiter, with friendly Juno standing by her side,
"Observe how great the storm of war that Mars impels against
the Punic camp, and the mighty slaughter on which he gluts his ire!
I beg you now, be pleased to send the Lady Iris down to earth.
My purpose here is not to destroy – no, rather let Rome hold
her sway with my blessing: for I would set Palladium there[12] -
no, not destroy the descendants of Troy! But Hannibal, the light
of Libya, my place of birth, I would not have his life snuffed out
in his blossoming years, nor such great promise cut sadly short."

Then Juno next took up the tale, impatient of her endless task,
"No, no," she cried, "that all mankind may know how mighty is
the rule of Jupiter, and how in all respects your powers outstrip
the other gods, my spouse, destroy with your flaming bolt – I beg
no mercy – the citadel of Carthage, bury the Carthaginian troops
deep, deep within a chasm of the earth, within the hollow depths
of Tartarus, or overthrow and drown them deep beneath the sea."

To which the father Jupiter replied with calm and gentle words,
"You fight against fate and harbour unsound and specious hopes.
That man, my child, against whom you choose to carry hostile arms,
will crush the youth of Carthage and assume the name of Africanus[13]
and bring to the capitol the laurel as a symbol of his Libyan victory,
while, my wife, the man on whom you lavish such courage and fame –
I prophecy his fate – will turn his arms away from the people of Rome,
nor is the date of disaster far away: the day and hour approaches
when he will wish he never chose to reach and cross the Alps."
So Jupiter spoke and swiftly sent the goddess Iris from Olympus,
to summon Mars and order him to abandon the fray.
Nor did Mars refuse, but left for the clouds, albeit with shouts
of protest, since he took delight in the clarion call of the trumpet's blast,
in wounds and blood and battle cries and the clash and clangour of arms.

As soon as the field was free at last from the competition of gods
and Mars had departed the plain, then Hannibal rushed back from its
furthermost part the where he had retreated from arms divine,
and shouting mightily brought in his train both cavalry and foot,
laborious siege engines and the bulk of great and armoured beasts[14].
And when he saw and recognized a young soldier harassing the light
armed troops with his sword, and his bloodied face betrayed his rage,
he cried, "So, Minucius, what Furies, or what god has driven you
to front your enemy, so that a second time you dare to trust yourself
to battle with me? For where is Fabius now who father-like did save
you from my arms? Rash fool, suffice it that once you could escape

[12] The temple of Vesta in Rome was the resting place of the image of Pallas which was brought to Italy from Troy by Aeneas when he fled the burning city.
[13] Scipio was awarded the title Africanus after his victory at Zama in 202 BCE which marked the end of the second Punic War and the final defeat of Carthage.
[14] These are elephants which are described as *turrigerae* – 'bearing towers on their backs'.

my hands!" His spear then was companion to his arrogant words
and transfixed Minucius' chest with the force of a battering ram,
cutting off as it struck any words of reply that might come.

Nor was the savage steel enough! For the massive black beasts
were set on, and against such monsters Roman troops were matched.
And Hannibal issued commands as he rode along the battle line,
instructing the Moors who controlled the Lucanian beasts[15]with goads
to provoke their elephants harshly on to war at the rampant charge.
And charge they do these warlike beasts and trumpet mightily,
their drivers wielding the ferocious goad to hasten their advance.
Howdahs sat on each blue grey back, equipped with men and fire
and javelins; a savage hail of rocks descended on the ranks
of men far below, while the men of Libya poured down in all
directions a veritable cloud of weapons from their lofty tower.
A close packed rampart stood – rank on rank of snowy tusks,
and on each tusk was fixed a close combat blade, the tip
of which gleamed, flashing down from the tusk's curved point.
In the general melee one beast drove its murderous tusk
quite through the armoured body of Ufens, lifting him high
and carrying him through the trampled ranks as he screamed.
And nor was Tadius' death the less dire: where his cuirass
protected his flanks with multiple folds of cloth, the sharp
edged point of a wilful tusk bored in by degrees, unbeknownst,
to raise the warrior off the ground with his echoing shield.
His courage was not shaken by this novel threat to life and limb.
Indeed he used the happenstance to win his fame – close up
to the beastly forehead he stabbed both eyes with flashing sword.
The creature, maddened by pain, reared high on its back legs,
and, wheeling about its ponderous weight, threw off its load.
A wretched sight to see both arms and men and sightless beast
come crashing down to the ground to share in a sudden disaster.

The Roman general orders then his men to hurl blazing firebrands
at the monstrous beasts and at the mobile forts they carried round
upon their backs be filled with torches all aflame with flaming pitch.
No sooner said than done: the backs of the elephants are alight
with smoke and concentrated flames; the hungry fires are fanned
by the howling wind and carried across and through the fighting towers[16].
Just so when the shepherd fires the grass on Pindus and on Rhodope
the fearsome flames spread through the woods and all the leafy hills
ignite, and of a sudden Vulcan's fires are burning, and they leap
from crest to crest across the wooden ridges of the mountain range.
The beasts driven mad by the incandescent hot and burning pitch
stampede and force wide swathes through the ranks of fighting men.
And nor has any the nerve to fight at quarters close with them:
they only dare engage with long-range javelins and arrow strikes.
The great beasts burn and in their rage and furious rampage spread
and toss the flames now here, now there and far and farther wide,

[15] The elephants were so called because they had first been seen in battle in the ranks of Pyrrhus' army in Lucania about 280 BCE.
[16] The phrase 'fighting towers' is borrowed from Duff's translation.

until they plunge themselves at last headlong in the flood and flow
of a nearby stream and, at first deceived by the shallow waters as
they flowed across the plain and, driven, carried the leaping flames
along beside the river banks, until at last they submerged their mass
en masse beneath the welcoming depths of the river's bed.

But, wherever there was a chance to fight and the Moorish beasts
were not as yet on fire, the men of Rome surrounded them
and from a distance pelted them with javelins and rocks,
and now with leaden sling-shot, like men laying siege
to towers that fortify the higher ground or to a city's citadel.
Then Mincius dared deeds worthy of a warrior that deserved
a better fate: in close combat he raised his good right hand
and sword, but ill luck damned his bravery, since the trunk
of the trumpeting beast, that panted hot breath, now wrapped
him in its brute enveloping coils and wrenched him high aloft
in that dread grip and shaking the wretch it hurled him high
to dash him down to earth again, poor man, and shatter his limbs.

In the midst of these disasters Paulus spotted Varro on the field
and taunted him, "Why don't we close and fight with Hannibal
hand to hand, this man we promised the city would stand
before your triumphal car with chains around his captive neck?
Alas for our home and its folk who reward the criminal and depraved![17]
In such a time of allotted disaster men would find it hard to say
whose was the worse disaster – which man's birth the more deserved
abortion, pray, yours or Hannibal's?" While Paulus gritted out
these words the Carthaginian hurled his spears at the enemy backs
as they fled, before the very eyes of the Roman general.
The consul's helm was struck and battered was his shield, and thus
provoked then Paulus charged more fiercely still the centre of the foe.

With Paulus gone to fight otherwhere Varro's sanity broke at last
and he snatched at the reins and wheeled his horse about and said,
"You pay the penalty, my native Rome, for summoning Varro
to command the war while Fabius was still alive and well.
What means this shift of consciousness or what this change of luck?
Is this some fatal fateful trap? I would that I might end all things
at once and take my life. Some god though checks my sword,
I know not which, to save me for some more grievous fate.
And shall I live? And bring back to the people of Rome
these broken rods stained with my soldiers' blood. Shall I parade
my face throughout the angry towns of Italy? And shall I flee -
to see my Rome, a punishment more dire than Hannibal would ask?"
The enemy's advance with spear and javelin curtailed his complaints,
his warhorse rushed him away, its reins now slack in his hands.

[17] The alleged proof of this was the election of Varro to the post of consul.

Punica: Book 10

Silius Italicus

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Book 10

The battle continues: Paulus fights and dies (1-325). Hannibal intends to march on Rome at once, but is prevented by the god of sleep, despatched by Juno (326-370). Despite Mago's protests he acquiesces (371-386). The remains of the Roman army reassemble at Canusium: their wretched plight is described (387-414). Metellus proposes that Rome be abandoned, but is threatened with death by Scipio (415-448). Hannibal surveys the field: the faithful horse of Cloelius. The story of Cloelia. Paulus' corpse is found and buried (449-577). Horror at Rome (578-591). Fabius attempts to lift the Romans' spirits (592-604) and defends Varro against their rage (605-622). Varro returns (623-639). The Senate votes to raise more soldiers and pursue the war (640-658)

When Paulus saw the enemy force begin to prevail, then like
a wild beast which, surrounded by a ring of spears, hurls itself
of its own accord upon the steel and despite its wounds brings
its enemy close, he carried his arms to the very centre of the fray
where perils were rife, and was eager for death on every sword.
He bellowed terribly, "'Stand firm, I beg of you and take the steel
in your chests, my men, and carry backs unscathed by wounds
to the shades below: all that is left for us now is a glorious death!
As you make your way down to the halls below I, Paulus, will be
your leader still." And on he went, swifter by far than Boreas
of Thessaly, the keen north wind, and faster than the winged shaft
sped back against their enemies by Parthians in full retreat,
and where Cato, oblivious of his youth and inspired by Mars,
was prosecuting the fight, there Paulus rushed upon the enemy
and snatched the youth away from death dealing arms, hard pressed
by the nimble Vascones and clustering darts of the Cantabrians.
In terror the enemy fell back, retraced their fearful steps
to the rear; just so when the cheerful hunter pursues the wild
she goat in a secret valley and follows close behind in the chase
until she tires and hopes by the by to lay his hand upon his prey,
and of a sudden there leaps from its cave a fearsome lion
that stands confronting him with gnashing teeth. The blood
and colour desert his cheeks, his weapons at once seem too small
to match the risk and his heart forgoes its much anticipated prize.
Now Paulus attacks with his sword the men who still resist hand
to hand, while now his javelins assail the backs of those who turn
to flee, appalled with dread. It pleases him to lose control of rage
and make a fancy show of his distress. A host of nameless men
submit to him alone. Had but a second Paulus been found amidst
the Roman forces there, Cannae would have lost its infamy.

At length the Roman wing collapsed and the central battle line
fragmented as well in full retreat. Both Labienus and Ocres
were cut down and Opiter, the latter brothers sent from the vine
clad hills of Setia, the former, Labienus, from the rocky heights
and walls of Cingulum. The men of Carthage united the three
of them in the fearful timing, but not the manner of their deaths:
Labienus fell to a spear that pierced his innards through and through;

the brothers fell, one wounded in the shoulder, one in the thigh.
You died, Maecenas, impaled in your groin by a Tyrian dart:
your noble name was honoured in your native Etruria , and as
belonged before to the holders of the royal sceptre there.
Abandoning all care for life then Paulus rushed through
the battle's heart seeking Hannibal: one fate alone a source
of dread – that he should die and that Hannibal should survive.

In fear of Paulus' might (for once was battle was such rage
and madness unleashed could not but end in death and ruin)
then Juno took the form of the craven coward Metellus.
"Why vainly release vain rage," she asked, 'in defiance of Fate,
when you alone as consul are Rome's sole hope of salvation?
If Paulus lives, the Roman empire lives, if Paulus dies,
the Roman empire dies along with him. Are you prepared
to front that young man in all his swelling pride and behead
the state in these troubled times? Now Hannibal would dare –
he is so joyful bellicose – to engage the Thunderer himself.
Even now I witnessed Varro heave his reins about and leave
to keep himself safe for more successful times.
Let Fate take its time, while still you may remove from death
a life worth more than ours! Your fight will presently resume."

At which the leader sighed and spoke, "Have I not cause
enough to seek my death in battle, when my ears must endure
to hear Metellus give advice as monstrous as this?
Flee, madman, flee! Take flight! I pray that you receive
no hostile shaft embedded in your back! I pray that you depart
in safety to reach and enter the walls of Rome unscathed
in Varro's company. And did you think that I deserved a life
such as that, and deem I was unworthy of a glorious death?
Yes, Hannibal is berserk, this very man who feels the strength
to face the might of Jupiter. What a fall is here from your
ancestors lofty enterprise! When would I rather choose to fight,
against which warrior would I rather match myself than Hannibal?
Whether as conquered or victor he will immortalize my name."

With these angry protests Paulus rushed back to the midst
of the foe and pursued and killed Acherras – he was far more
swift of foot – as that man retraced his path and stealthily
infiltrated the close packed ranks and dense shield wall
of the Punic troops. Just so the Belgian hound hunts down
the boars he cannot see, but with his skilful nose
and muted snout tracks down the wild beasts' wanderings,
and pressing hard upon the hoof marks makes sweeps across
the hills so far free of the hunters' encircling ring,
nor does he cease until he savours the scent once caught,
and finds their secret hiding place amongst the spiny thorns.

But the wife of Jupiter, when her words proved incapable
of deterring him from the fray, and the consul still stoked his rage,
she took in turn the shape of the Moorish warrior, Gelesta,

and unrecognized by Hannibal called him from the savage fight,
"Eternal pride of Carthage," she cried, "bring your right hand
and armour here to bring to aid those who implore your aid.
For Paulus wages horrid war beside the flooded river banks;
no other foeman's death than his will grant you greater fame."
She spoke and hurried Hannibal to a separate part of the field.

A man was harrying the Afric troops upon the upraised bank –
his name was Crista. And his half dozen sons were engaged
in arms around their sire. His house and home were humble, but not
without repute among the Tudertes and far famed in Umbria
for fighting skills, who by his deadly deeds had taught his folk
and armoured band of sons to manage well the arts of war.
And now this company of kin, led by their harsh instructor,
when sated with the slaughter of men, brought down with blows
innumerable an elephant, its turret on its back. Then torches flew
and they took delight to see the flaming death throes of the beast,
when suddenly appeared the flash of a helmet and, upon that helm
held high, there rippled a brilliant crest. Nor did the older man
hold back (he knew the aura of the warrior), but he himself urged
his troops and sons into the fiercest of the fight and ordered them
to hurl thick volleys of darts, not to dread the flames that blazed
from his face or helmet, which flickered and danced with fire.
Just so the eagle of Jove when she rears in the nest her young,
concerned that they are worthy to carry His thunderbolts,
examines them, their faces turned to the face of the sun itself,
and tests her offspring's suitability for action in Phoebus' rays[1].
Then Crista set his men his own example for the summoning fight,
and see – his spear flies speedily through the intervening winds,
but its point could not transfix the many layered golden corselet
to any depth, but flapped down to betray the elder's feeble strike.
Then Hannibal declared, "What madness can induce your hand,
enfeebled by age, to strike such a feeble blow? Your quivering spear
scarce grazed the surface of my laminate of pure Gallician gold.
See now, I return your weapon to you. Your famous brood
of sons would learn the art of war the better far from me!"
And so he pierced the poor man's chest with his own shaft.

Then in return - and terrible to see – six javelins flung by six
right hands homed in, along with another six spears of equal force.
Just so in Libya's land, when the Moorish hunter closes in
and presses hard upon the lioness, besieged within her lair,
her cubs attack enraged and attempt an assault upon their foe,
to no avail because their fangs are not yet firm within their jaws.
Then Hannibal absorbed the hail of javelins upon his shield,
and gathering himself behind it withstood the crashing blows
of spears that struck. And Hannibal was not content as yet
with wounds and slaughter dealt, but in his rage breathed hard
and feared he might not slay them all and stretch their bodies
out beside their father's corpse, eliminate their wretched clan.

[1] According to Duff *ad loc.* 'The mother-eagle was supposed to throw out of the nest as spurious any eaglet that was unable to look steadily at the sun.'

Then Hannibal addressed his squire, Abaris, who fanned with him
the angry flames of Mars and shared the work of every battle field,
"Supply me arms! That band of brothers who have made assault
upon my shield are keen to be sent down to the darkling stream
of Avernus. They will reap the fruits of their misguided loyalties."
He then ran through the eldest son, one Lucas, with his javelin.
Pierced by the pointed shaft the youth slipped down and fell back
across his brothers' shields and lay there still, his face upturned.
Next Volso tried to rip out the deadly steel by hand, when Hannibal
laid him low him with a spear (provided by chance from a heap
of the dead) that pierced his shield to cleave his nostrils and nose.
Then Vesulus slipped and collapsed in his brothers' warm blood
and a slashing sword stroke took off his head, when Hannibal –
a barbarous act –hurled helmet and head as a missile thrown
at the retreating backs of Vesulus' kin. Telesinus fell struck down
by a stone that smashed his backbone, just where the spine
unites the limbs together and saw too his brother Quercens' limbs
collapse and fall, as he himself gasped out his final breath
of life to the circumambient air, and closed fast his eyes on their
uncertain and flickering view. Then Perusinus, drained at once
by grief and fear and precipitate flight, but filled with rage
and sustained by courage, pressed on still and made his vague
and stumbling way across the battlefield, where Hannibal
then skewered him above the region of the groin – his spear a stake
his squire had plucked from the rugged hide of a fallen elephant
to hand to him, a blazing brand to hold his victim fiercely down.
He had tried to ease the deadly rage of Hannibal with prayers,
but fires infernal filled at once his freshly opened mouth
as he sucked the conflagration deep within his lungs.
At length then Crista fell, a name long time well known
in Umbria, along with all his sons. Just so the lofty beech
or oak tree planted by the ancestors when struck by Jupiter's bolt
explodes in smoke and heaven's sulphurous flames despoil
the boughs held sacred through time, until, laid low by the god,
it widely falls and, as the massive trunk comes crashing down,
its offspring shoots and suckers are smothered and concealed.

While Hannibal achieved these feats beside the stream of Aufidus,
then Paulus payed retribution in advance for his impending death
with many a corpse, like some heroic victor waging war amidst
a thousand foes. The mighty Phorcys fell who came from the caves
of Calpe, Herculean[2], upon his shield the Gorgon's head engraved.
For that savage deity and all her race called Calpe their ancestral home.
As Phorcys charged all swollen with pride in his famous lineage,
descended from Medusa's stock, that horrid and petrifying beast,
he lunged and sought to land a violent blow on Paulus' groin –
the left – when he, the consul, seized him by his lofty helmet's crest,
deflected the blow and cast him down and held him on the ground,
while, where his belt wrapped round his lower back to guard the hips,

[2] Gibraltar.

he buried deep his sword with downward strike to free a gush
of steaming blood that poured from the yawning gut thrust wound:
thus fell upon Aetolian soil a man who had lived by Atlantic's shore.

Amidst this slaughter there was an attack with sudden fearful force
upon the Roman rear, the perpetrators warriors, swirling round
in shock assault, were trained by Hannibal, master mind of guile,
and consciously prepared by him for tactics such as these.
They wove their web of deceit, pretending to flee the Carthaginian camp,
surrendering apparently, and then, forming ranks behind their foe,
their minds quite intent on slaughter, they charged the Roman rear.
All fully armed they lacked neither sword nor spear, for spear
and sword they had snatched in passing from the bodies of the dead.
From a distance Galba spotted an enemy seize and carry off
a Roman standard – rout had not yet robbed him of his appetite
for bravery – and so he strove with all his physical and mental strength
to catch the victorious thief and cut him down in advance of his escape,
but while struggling to drag his hard won prize from his victim's corpse,
whose dying hand released the standard only tardily, he was run through
by Amorgus' sword, Amorgus who had charged at speed to attack.
Thus Galba fell and died, his hopes of high achievements dashed.

In the midst of this as if the savage Enyo[3] was not yet satisfied
with glutting her dire rage, the south east wind, Vulturnus, raised
the swirling dust from off the plain, the burning eddying sands.
And now the massive and strident storm drove struggling warriors
to the uttermost limits, far across the plain, crashing them against
the hollowed river banks to drown them deep in the swollen stream.
And this was where you met your end, unlucky Curio, where Aufidus
witnessed there your last moments as you died an ignoble death.
Enraged he sought to delay the terrified rank and file and arrest
with his own opposing limbs their headlong flight, but was himself
hurled forward by the pressing mass of soldiers in full retreat
and swallowed by the surging and turbulent stream, was rolled
along the river's bed to come to rest inglorious on Adriatic sands.

Then Paulus a man of huge endurance, with no knowledge of how
to bend his neck to Fortune's yoke made a frontal charge against
the army of his conquerors. His passion for a soldier's death and his
belief in the certainty of an imminent demise alone encouraged him.
It was then that Viriathus, great-hearted ruler of a realm in Spain,
with his javelin drove a war weary Roman soldier close beneath
the furious gaze of Paulus and then and there did butcher him.
What grief, what tears! Servilius, one of the very best of warriors
second only to Paulus in the business of war, next succumbed
to a barbarian's sword to add by his individual death fresh odium
to Cannae's name. The consul could not contain his desolate rage
and though the contrary force of the maddening wind restricted him
and clouded with dust his vision and the daylight both, at last
he broke through the roiling cloud of congested dust and sand.

[3] Enyo is an alternative name for Bellona, a goddess of war.

Enraged then Paulus advanced to attack Viriathus, who in Spanish style,
was beating on his shield as he roared his savage song of victory,
and Paulus fatally pierced the Spaniard's chest on his left hand side
but this was Paulus' final kill. No more could the consul engage
his good right hand the war, nor was there further chance
for you, Rome, to use your Paulus in the battles yet to come.
A mighty boulder thrown with massive force by hand unknown
struck him full in the face and thrust the brazen fragments of his helm
deep into the facial bones to cover his face with a mask of blood.
Then staggering back he supported his weakening limbs on a rock
close by and, panting through the bubbling wound, he seated himself
on his shield, a terrible sight to see with his face a mass of gore.
Just so the mighty lion will make light of the lesser shafts and toss
them off, but when at last he takes a sword thrust through the chest,
he stands and takes the blow and trembles in the centre of the stadium,
blood streaming from his jaws and nose, and soaks his mane,
and all the while he gives forth a low and throaty rumbling roar,
then vomits from his gaping jaws a mix of foam and blood.
And then the men of Africa fell on him, while Hannibal came
at the gallop himself, the wind behind him, along the path cleared
by his sword, his speeding horse and the beasts of the warlike tusks.
When Piso, hid beneath the heaps of weaponry, saw Hannibal
ride roughshod over the bodies fallen there he strove to raise himself
on his spear and lifting the weapon's point he gutted Hannibal's steed,
and when it fell he next tried himself in vain to straddle the beast.
Although the tumbling horse had thrown him as it fell upon its flank,
the general, Hannibal, regained himself, was on his feet in a flash,
"Are these Roman ghosts reborn to ply their hands in wars anew
and after death? And can death itself not lay these men to rest?"
He spoke and while Paulus strove to raise his wounded body, then
the Carthaginian stood tall and buried his sword in Piso's heart.

And see! Lentulus, wounded by a Cretan arrow in his foot, had given
his horse full rein and was fleeing the plain when he saw his general,
the consul Paulus, soaking with blood the rock on which he sat,
his grim stare fixed as his soul slipped slowly away to Tartarus.
Ashamed of his flight he suffered a change of heart. He saw Rome
in flames and Hannibal, blood stained, already standing at the gates
of the city. The plain of Cannae lay before his eyes drinking the blood
of Latium. "What defence is left at the last," he cried, "to stop the light
of tomorrow's day bringing down the Carthaginian host on Rome,
if, Paulus, you abandon the ship of state in such tempestuous times?
I call the gods to witness,' he declared, "unless you contain our hurts,
sustained in this terrible war and choose to survive this storm and live –
harsh though my words may be, inspired by grief – you will wound
Rome more than Varro did. You are our only hope in these dread times,
so take this horse, I beg of you and I myself will lift your failing limbs
upon my shoulders and shall settle you safely down upon his back."

At this the consul spat out the blood that streamed from his
wrecked mouth and said, "Worthy son of worthy ancestors!
Our prospects are not so grim so long as hearts like yours

still flourish in the realm of Romulus. Apply your spurs
to your steed as best your wounds allow to fly from here,
as quickly as you may to the city gates. This bane will rush the walls.
Speak, urge them there to hand the reins of power to Fabius.
Insanity contested the warnings which we gave. What can I do
in what is left of life, but demonstrate to the purblind men of Rome
that Paulus knows the way to die? Shall I undone by fatal wounds
be carried home to Rome? Why, Hannibal would pay whatever price
to see me turn and flee! No! Paulus' heart and soul are not so made!
My ghost shall not go down to the shades diminished so.
The man that once… but why delay your flight with idle and sick
complaint, my Lentulus? Now go, and with your spear-point goad
your weary horse to speed its flight." Then Lentulus sought
the city bringing Paulus' solemn message. And nor did Paulus,
the consul allow his life's last moments go to waste. Just like
the tigress, backing away at last, undone with mortal wounds,
lies down to an ultimate joust in the final affray with death,
her failing jaws agape - her bite to no avail, her strength
quite spent - now with tip-tongue *licks* the pointed spears.
For now when Iertas came close and brandished his spear,
delighting in the safe and sure conviction of an imminent kill,
the consul arose and impaled Iertas on his unexpected sword,
then looked around to find the Carthaginian general, his need
to surrender his warrior's life to that great warrior's hand.
But he was overcome by an assemblage of darts all thrown
from every side by Numidians, Garamantians, Celts, Moors and Asturians.
So Paulus died. And with him his deep thought and mighty hand.
And if sole charge had been entrusted to him of handling the war,
he would perhaps have matched Fabius himself. His death enriched
his city's fair fame and raised his name among the very stars.

After Rome's hopes and plans fell with their general's death,
her army, leaderless now, was assailed by savage assaults,
and Africa rampaged victorious across the battlefield.
Here lay the men of Picenum, the warriors of Umbria,
the youth of Sicily lays sprawled and troops from Hernica.
Around are scattered standards which the warrior Samnites bore,
or Sarnus' citizens and the Marsians' armoured rank and file.
Pierced shields and helms abound and swords quite useless now,
with further debris of shields that were smashed on shield,
and bloodied bits torn from the foaming mouths of cavalry mounts.
The ensanguined Aufidus, all tumid, inundates the plain,
and in his fury restores to the banks the bodies he took.
Just so a Lagean[4] warship, is seen like some great island on
the vasty sea, but spreads her flotsam and jetsam abroad to hide
the waves, when hurled upon the rocks by Eurus' stormy blast.
Her rowing benches litter the sea, and masts with tattered sails,
along with wretched sailors too that spew forth the liquid brine.

Now Hannibal had measured out the day in constant bloody strife,

[4] Egyptian, from Lagus who founded the Ptolemaic dynasty.

and when, at last, the falling darkness stole away his berserk rage,
he abandoned the fray and spared his men the task of further butchery.
His mind, however, was kept wide awake and lingered still upon
his pressing cares, could not at all endure the silence of the night.
His failure yet to breach the longed for gates of Rome now stung,
despite the many mighty favours showered on him by the gods.
His pleasure it is to march with all despatch at dawn, his soldiers'
swords drawn, their blood still hot, their hands befouled with gore,
to break the barricades by main force, engulf the walls in fire,
to make the conflagration of the Capitol a speedy sequel to Cannae.

Saturn's child, the wife of Jove, was distressed by Hannibal's plan,
quite well aware of her spouse's rage and his plans for Latium,
she tries to rein in the young man's youthful passion and greedy hopes
for an endeavour bound to fail. And so at once she summoned Sleep,
who rules the still of night, who frequently acts to soothe the eyes
in slumber of her brother and consort, Jove, however loth his will.
She smiled upon Sleep and said, "My summons and demands of you,
divine Sleep, are not for a burdensome task, nor yet to conquer Jove
with the touch of your silken wings. You need not close a thousand eyes,
nor must the watchful guard of Inachus' child be overcome by you
and endless night, yes, Argus, who mocks your heavenly powers.
Send dreams, strange dreams to the Carthaginian general, advising him
to quench his will to look upon Rome and the walls denied to him,
to the invasion of which the ruler of Olympus will never acquiesce."

Sleep swiftly carried out her charge and through the dark he winged
his way to bring in a curving horn his drug refined from poppy seeds.
In silence descending he sought out first the tent of Hannibal,
next fanned his drowsy wings over his recumbent head, infused
his eyes with sleep, and touched his head with Lethe's wand.
Now sullen dreams disturbed his fevered and ambitious mind.
He sees himself surround the Tiber's flood with a mass of men,
and take his challenging place before the city wall's of Rome.
And Jupiter himself was seen refulgent on the topmost peak
of Tarpeia's rock, his good right hand held up the thunderbolt,
primed now to fire, while the plains of Latium smoked sulphur,
and Anio's waters trembled within its chilly blue stream.
Again and again before his eyes the lightning, close packed,
flashed, stunning him. And then the voice descend from above,
"Young man, the glory gained from Cannae's triumph is quite
enough. Restrain your steps! Fate is set against you sacking Rome's
walls divine – you are as like to take by siege my own illustrious
and Olympian home!" Then Sleep departed at the last, his task
was done, the mission imposed by the lady Juno now complete.
Nor yet did the dawn expunge the dreadful image from his mind.

In the midst of these empty but disturbing dreams Lord Mago came
to say that in the night the Roman camp and its remaining troops
had yielded that he had brought with him a column rich with spoils,
and pledged that Hannibal would feast in joy upon the Roman Capitol
before a full five days had completed their succession, but Hannibal,

without revealing the heavenly words of warning and his hidden fear,
made excuses of his soldiers' wounds and weariness, the savage price
of labours sore, and urged him not to trust too much in such success.
His brother's heart was as much deject as if his orders were to turn
about and lead his standards in retreat from the walls of Rome,
"Our efforts, then,' he said, "have not conquered Rome, as she herself
believes, but only Varro! What turn of fate would have you spurn
the gifts of Mars and put on hold your country's fate and destiny?
Pray, let me lead the cavalry on the charge and - on my life I swear –
accept the walls of Rome and their open gates without a battle fought!"

While Mago raged with counsel his cautious brother would not take,
the Latin force had begun to regather inside Canusium, and enclose
the surviving refugees of Cannae behind a heavily fortified wall
and ditch. And grim indeed their aspect in that time of wretchedness!
No eagles there, no rallying points for warriors, no consular imperium!
No lictors there to carry the sacred fasces before a consul's advance.
Their ravaged bodies sick with fear could scarce sustain their weight
on feeble limbs, like once mighty buildings on the brink of collapse.
Great shouts alternated with times of silence as men stared fixedly
at the ground. The majority are defenceless, their left arms bare
of shields. The soldiers lack swords with which they might fight.
All the cavalrymen are hurt. They have torn the prideful plumes
from helmets, condemning the pomp and circumstance of Mars.
Their breastplates are pierced with a multitude of spears,
while Moorish arrows hang down still from their leathern shirts.
At intervals they seek their friends with mournful lamentation.
Their tears are shed for Galba now, now Piso and now for Curio,
deserving of a death with sword in hand, and for stout Scaevola.
Groups weep for each of these, but all lament the savage fate
of Paulus as they would a father's death, "I would he had not ceased
to sing disaster's song, but had rather put a stop to Varro's purposes.
In vain he tried so many times to save the city from this day, and yet
his hand was mighty in war." But those oppressed by dread of that
to come made haste to dig a defensive ditch outside the city walls,
and fortified its gates with what materials were ready to hand.
And where the plain lay wide and open to the enemy's advance,
they fixed fire hardened branches in the ground like sharpened racks
of antlers, hidden and set to wound the hooves of the charging horse.

And see! Beyond defeat and Rome's untreatable and mortal wound,
the war's survivors and those uninjured by the Carthaginian sword
were seized of an impious madness that battened on their very soul.
They were prepared to cross the sea and so evade the Tyrian steel
and Punic swords - and Hannibal, by emigration far, yes, far away.
The leader of this exile band was one Metellus, a man no friend
of Mars, though born of a noble house. He pressed his foul plan
on minds ill equipped for war, an ignoble and degenerate crew,
and looked to see them settle down in some far off foreign land,
a place where they might hide themselves and where no names
from Carthage might reach, nor the shame of Rome abandoned.
When Scipio learned of this, his mind incandescent with rage -

as great a figure as when he stood firm in the battle's heat
against great Hannibal - he snatched up his sword with all speed,
and where these craven men were plotting shame and fatal plans
for Latium he broke down their doors, a colossus rushing in.
Then brandishing his naked sword before their craven faces he
cried, "Father, whose home of choice, second only to Olympus,
is Rome's Tarpeian Rock and shrine, and Saturnian Juno, still harsh
in spite of Trojan suffering, and you, Minerva, whose fierce
and virgin breast is girt with the aegis and the Gorgon's rage,
and gods indigenous, behold, by all your powers divine
and on my father's noble head, no less a pledge than your
divinity, I swear that while my life remains intact I never shall
abandon Rome[5], nor yet in turn let Rome abandoned be.
Swear swiftly by the gods, Metellus, that, even if her city walls
are ablaze with Carthaginian brands, you will never dare to make
your way to foreign parts. And if you do not make this oath,
then the source of all your dread and ruptured sleep and dreams,
yes, Hannibal, is here in my persona, armed with sword in hand!
You will die and your death will win me more fame than any Punic death!"
His threat cut short their plans; at once in the order prescribed
they pledge their lives to Rome and swear to the gods an oath
decreed for them by Scipio and purge their hearts of guilt.

And while the men of Rome were thus engaged, their minds
distressed, lord Hannibal reviewed the field of battle as he rode,
observing and revelling in his savage and blood stained handiwork.
His progress was accompanied by a mighty crowd of military staff,
before whose cruel Punic eyes he flaunted the gratifying spectacle.
Among the scattered dead one Cloelius, much wounded in the chest,
gasped out his final breath and the remnants of life to the breeze,
and as his breathing failed he strained with meagre strength to raise
the cumbersome weight of his sinking head upon its feeble neck.
His warhorse recognized the failing Cloelius and with ears pricked
and whinnying shrill, unseated Bagaesus who bestrode him as a prize
of the war and was cantering him at speed towards the battlefield.
Then gathering himself at the gallop he flew across ground slick
with standing pools of blood and gore and over the mangled dead
to come to a shuddering halt beside the face of his prostrate lord.
And then as he had been accustomed and taught he lowered his neck,
sinking down to his knees, legs bending, and offered his back
for his master to mount, shivering the while with proprietorial love.
That spirited horse had never carried a more fortunate knight
and warrior than his master Cloelius, whether his body and limbs
were stretched prone along the creature's galloping back and mane,
or bareback and standing erect in full flight, as his speeding steed
traversed the length of the race track, thundering down to the line.

Then Hannibal, so much amazed at this horse that matched a man's
emotions, asked who was this brave youth that fought so hard against
untimely death, and inquired what was his family name and rank,

[5] With typical periphrasis Silius uses the phrase *Lavinia regna* – 'the realms of Lavinium'.

as he gifted him even as he spoke a swift and more merciful death.
Then Cinna answered him, who had deserted his own side and thrown
in his lot and rode with Hannibal, persuaded by Rome's defeats.
"Omnipotent lord," he said, "the history of the man's descent is not
unworthy of your ears. Upon a time the city of Rome herself
was ruled by kings, the city that now rejects the rule of Carthage.
However, come the time she grew impatient with Superbus' tyranny
and drove the despot out, at once there came a mighty warlike force
from Clusium – you have heard no doubt the tales of Porsena,
and of Horatius and the punitive expedition led from Etruria.
Lars Porsena's support came from the power and wealth of Tuscany,
as he strove to restore through civil war the exiled Tuscan dynasty.
Many assaults were made to no avail. The tyrant then laid violent siege
to the Janiculum[6]. Peace came at last and was approved, and all
hostilities finally ceased, and the war was ended with a treaty agreed,
and hostages exchanged as guarantees. But, by the gods, the hearts
of Rome would not be tamed! A race prepared to face whatever risks
for glory gained! One Cloelia, a child who had not as not yet quite
completed twice six years of age, a girl of scarce twelve years,
was sent across the Tiber as one of a company of maidens to serve
both as hostages and a pledge of peace to the Etruscan king.
I pass over the deeds of men: in spite of the king, the treaty, her age
and the river this girl then swam back without fear across the stream -
father Tiber himself amazed, as with adolescent arms she cleft the waves.
If nature had changed the sex of this girl, perhaps Lars Porsena
would not have been allowed to return home to Tuscany.
But lest I keep you longer with my tale, this youth derives his line
and memorable name from that most famous ancestor, Cloelia."

While Cinna revealed this tale, of a sudden a cry broke out close by
to their left. In the midst of the ruin of mangled bodies and arms
of the dead they had unearthed the corpse of Paulus from deep
within the thronging mass of the random tumbled and scattered dead.
An awful sight! How different from the man whose shafts had so
discomfited the Carthaginian ranks. Or from that Paulus that overthrew
the kingdoms of the Taulantes, and cast in chains the Illyrian king[7].
His grey head fouled with dust, and black his beard with clots
of blood, his teeth smashed by the shocking impact of the stone
from the wall, his entire body bled as if a single dreadful wound.

Which when the Carthaginian general saw redoubled his delight,
'Flee Varro,' then he cried, "yes, Varro, flee and live, so long
as Paulus here lies dead! Describe for your senate and for Fabius
Cunctator and the Roman populace the totality of Cannae's loss!
If, Varro, so great is your desire for life then one more time I grant
the chance to flee, but yet this man whose heart beat hot and strong
with hate foe me, my worthy foe, he shall be honoured with the last
and final rites of burial and he shall win the honour of a tomb.
How great in death does Paulus lie! This one man's death is cause

[6] A hill, one of Rome's seven on the west bank of the Tiber.
[7] See Duff *ad loc.* 'The Taulantes were an Illyrian people: for the victory of Paulus over Illyricum in 219 B.C. see viii. 289 foll.'

of more delight than a thousand other lives. And when my fated time
is come, I pray for such a death myself and Carthage surviving safe."
Thus the he spoke and bad the bodies of his countrymen be laid
in the earth to rest, when next Aurora[8] woke and rose to make blush
the morning sky, and ordered his men to mound great heaps of arms
to burn as offerings to Mars. And his men though tired made haste
to do his bidding and scattered in groups through the nearby woods
to fell the trees: the lofty forests on the wooded ridges ring
to the sound of the axe. Here and there ash trees are split and fall,
accompanied by poplars, their foliage pale, cut down by strong
young arms, holm oak too, sown once in the days of men of old.
Oak trees fall and roll and maritime pines that love the shore,
and mournful cypresses to decorate the catafalque beside the pyre,
the which they then strove speedily to build, competing in haste,
a doleful duty and a meaningless task for the reft and gone,
until lord Phoebus plunged his panting team of horse deep
in the western sea[9] and in flight from the sky the moon departs
and tows the night in her train, removing the blinding dark.
Next, when Phaëthon's chariot blazed with it's earliest light,
it's reins aglow, and the daylight hues returned to the earth,
they torched the pyres and burned the rotting bodies of their slain
on hostile ground. A dread anxiety for their uncertain future fate
invaded their minds, and an unspoken apprehension assailed
their inmost hearts that if the fickle fortune of Mars so led
them presently, they too must lie in this same inimical soil.
And in your honour then, most potent Mars, there arose heaped
to the stars a mighty constructed mountain of weapons and arms.
Lord Hannibal himself, now lifting aloft in his hand a torch
of pine engulfed in flames, urged Mars to pay close heed,
"Victorious over Roman arms, here Hannibal burns the first fruits
of battle and the gifts of a joyous and conquering war for you,
Father Mars, who was not deaf to my prayers of a former time,
and my troop of still surviving men do dedicate these arms to you."

And then he hurled the torch and hungry flames devoured
the blazing mound, while with the darkness banished, the crest
of fire burst through to the skies to fill the plains with light.
Next swiftly he went to the tomb and funeral rites bestowed
on Paulus in conspicuous tribute to one noble foe now dead.
They raised the pyre on high and made a bier, soft from fresh
cut turf. On this were presents laid in honour of the hero's corpse:
there were his sword and shield, inimical to those that felt
their touch, with them the rods of office and axes broken in war,
a cause of dread in themselves and an arrogant mark of power.
No wife nor sons were there, nor company of kin conjoined
by blood, nor did the venerable ancestral masks, raised high
on lofty litters process before the corpse to dignify the funeral,
quite bare it was of any ornament, but Hannibal's praise alone
sufficed to dignify the moment. For he sighed and cast upon

[8] Dawn.
[9] Silius uses a typically learned epithet – *Tartessian*, which refers to a town in Andalusia in south west Spain.

the body there a glowing purple coverlet, inlaid with threads
of cloth of gold, and uttered these last words to honour him,
“Go, pride of Italy! Go where it is meet and right that spirits go
whose virtuous deeds have merited pride. Your fame is secured
already by glorious death: my life’s work is still Fortune’s toy.
She orders me on, in ignorance yet of my future and my fate.”
The African spoke, and suddenly, amidst the crackling flames
the Roman’s spirit soared to heaven’s topmost heights, triumphant.

And then with ever swelling sound did Rumour fly to the stars;
across both land and sea she made her way at first to enter Rome.
The citizens had no faith in their city’s walls, but their fearful hope
was centred on the citadel alone: for no fighting youth survived
and Italy stood bereft of all but a vain and insubstantial name.
The fact that as yet no hostile force had breached the city’s gates
they read as but contemptuous delay. Their houses they foresaw
in flames, their temples plundered, and their children’s butchery,
a dreadful sight, the smoke of pillage rose above the seven hills.
One day lamented now the death of twice one hundred magistrates,
and grieved for the tottering walls of Rome, a city’s walls
exhausted by the loss of sixty thousand men of military age:
this both after Trebia and the waters still of Trasimene profound -
the allies devastated equally too by a matching butcher’s bill.
And yet the remnant of the senate, mindful of their duty, took up
allotted tasks, like urgent Fabius, his eyes encompassing all
as he harangued the populace, “There is no reason left now
for delay, believe me: rather let us make haste to render vain
the enemy’s bold designs by manning now the city’s walls!
Inaction among fainthearted men breeds fortunes harsh,
adversity grows fat on fear; come quickly men, take down
the armour from the shrines, and swiftly strip your homes
of weaponry and refurbish plundered trophy shields for war!
We will suffice our country’s needs, if from our company
no man succumbs to fear to lessen it. On open ground
our pestilential foe must needs be feared, but the nimble Moor,
his body armour light and lightly armed, will never breach our walls.”

While Fabius honed spirits blunted now by fear, a rumour spread
along the city walls that Varro was approaching,
a report that filled men’s hearts with secret consternation.
Just as when perhaps the captain of some stricken ship
escapes alone and swims to the vacant shores from the sea,
and men are uncertain whether to stretch or deny a saving hand
to the storm-tossed man, whether they should hate the sole
and solitary survival of the skipper from the shipwrecked craft.
How great the stain on Virro’s name who dares approach the gates,
and comes as dire harbinger of disaster to his fearful citizens!

Such protest were assuaged by Fabius who taught how ugly an act
it was to rage when faced by defeat, and so he soothed the people’s ire.
Indeed it was not right for men who claimed descent from Mars
to succumb to disaster, unable to conceal their grief, and to seek,

by punishing others, to win some solace for their pain.
And if indeed they would grant him a word of reproach, that day
did dawn more gloomily for him on which he saw Varro come
to the camp, than when he saw him return, his army reft from him.
Their threats subsided at these words and their mind set changed:
for now they pitied Varro's fate, and believed the Carthaginian
had cheated been of joy by the death of only one of the consular pair.
So then all the people thronged forth rank on rank to thank
the man, and declared the belief that he had behaved with great
heart, trusting in ancestral pride and power, a man who held faith
in a city founded by the ancient sons of Troy's Laomedon.

No less though wretched in himself and disturbed by the weight
of shame, the consul wept as he made his faltering approach
to the city walls. He felt ashamed to lift his lowered head,
to look upon his fatherland and renew their mutual grief.
Although the people and the senators came to greet his return,
it seemed to him they were not thanking him, but rather each
was demanding sons and brothers back, while at the same time
the grieving mothers were come to mutilate the consul's face.
And so the lictors escorted him in silence inside the city while he,
himself required no recognition for an office damned by deities.

The senators, though, and Fabius, their grief now firmly set aside,
made haste to business. Slaves selected for their youth and strength
were conscripted quickly, nor were the barracks closed to them.
Salvation's need outweighed false pride - their intent to restore
Aeneas's resurrected realm by any means to the rule of the Fates[10],
enlisting even slaves to save the citadel, its sovereignty, and its state -
time honoured liberty. They stripped their children's bodies of their
childish garb, regirt them in armour: little boys' faces were enclosed
in helmets, were urged to come of age by slaughtering the enemy.
Likewise the senators, although besieged by hordes of petitioners,
refused to pay cheap ransom for the mass of prisoners of war
(this very much to Hannibal's astonishment) but remained
quite obdurate in their utter refusal to hand over gold.
For they considered a soldier's capacity for surrender far
outstripped the most toxic of crimes. Then sentence was passed
on those who had fled the field– their penalty to serve in far
Sicilia, banished there until the enemy had fled from Latium.
Thus Rome was then! And, Carthage, were it fated Rome
should change upon your fall, then would you still remained!

[10] Since the 'realm of Aeneas' had suffered its virtual death throes on the field of Cannae.

Punica: Book 11

Silius Italicus

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Punica, Book 11

Many of the Italian communities rebel and join forces with Hannibal (1-27). *The wealthy city of Capua is likewise tempted to throw in its lot with the Carthaginian* (28-54). *Legates are sent from Capua to Rome with the request that one of the two consuls should be from Campania. Prompted by Torquatus, Fabius and Marcellus the Romans refuse* (55-129). *Capua joins Hannibal despite protests from Decius, who is threatened with arrest by Hannibal when the latter marches on Capua* (130-258). *Hannibal is feasted and the party is entertained by the bard Teuthras of Cumae* (259-302). *Pacuvius dissuades his son from an assassination attempt on the Carthaginian general* (303-368). *Mago is despatched to Carthage to announce Hannibal's successes, while Hannibal winters over at Capua, where Venus saps the energies of his troops, while he is further entertained by Teuthras* (369-482). *Clashes between Mago and Hanno in Carthage are described* (483-553). *Although Hanno makes an argument for peace reinforcements are sent to Spain and Italy* (554-611).

Come now and let me list the tribes that the dread defeat
on Apulia's plains converted to the camp and side
of Hannibal: nowhere is human loyalty sustained for long
when Fortune is fickle. States now contended each with each
to clasp the patently faithless hand of Carthage, too quick
to lose faith in the damaged hopes of an unfortunate Rome.
Most savage were the Samnites in renewing at this time
the memories of rage and hatred of histories long past.
The fickle Bruttii's tardy conscience at the last did mitigate
their crimes, the while Apulia betrayed deceitful ambiguity,
examples followed slavishly by the capricious clan of Hirpini,
quite unprovoked by Rome and rebellion spread like some foul
contagious plague through all the varied tribes of Italy.
Now both Atella and Calatia despatched their levied troops
to join the camp of Hannibal, their duty succumbing to fear.
Next Spartan Tarentum, founded by Phalantus, eased out
from under the Roman yoke, erratic… lofty Croton made
available its ports in friendship, taught the sons of Hercules
and Thespius to bow their heads, submit to barbarian wills.
The same distemper struck the Locrians; the shallow coast
where Greater Greece still nurtured Argive towns, the coast
that curves to meet the deeper depths of an Ionian sea,
enslaved to Carthaginian fortune and success in war,
in dread swore also fealty and warlike aid to Hannibal.
The boastful Celts, now settled by the Po, increased
the woes of Italy, long-standing their grudge, which sped
their union with the enemy, uniting their total force of arms.

Both the Celts and tribes of the Boii were justified perhaps
to wage again a civil war, but who would believe the rage
of Capua would match that of the Senones[1] and that a city
of Trojan origins would join forces with an African foe,

[1] See Bk. 1. 624.

believe that such a shift occurred solely through time's change?
A life of luxury and idleness nurtured on debauch, all sense
of modesty devoured by wickedness and a sole and flawed
surviving sense of respect - for wealth - was the moral death
of a people engulfed by sloth, released from the rule of law.
Their brutal arrogance worked at the last to destroy them,
and their vices lacked not means, since no other Italian state
(thanks be to Fortune) was better endowed with supplies
of silver and gold. Their citizens' clothes were steeped
in Tyrian dyes, while regal banquets started at noon
and breaking dawn discovered still their drunken debauch –
their lives were besmirched with the stain of every vice.
The city fathers then oppressed the people who rejoiced
in the senate's opprobrium – so civil strife and clashing hearts
arose. The older generation, the more corrupt themselves,
outstripped their younger counterparts in rash and thoughtless vice.

Men infamous for their base birth and lowly, obscure roots
felt free to claim, demand and hope foremost for themselves
command and control of the reins of a state in terminal decline.
What's more these 'warriors' were accustomed to enliven feasts
with slaughter, serving savage spectacles the while they dined
of deadly sword play, spattering their cups and reeking board
with copious gouts of blood, libations from the fallen combatants.

And then Pacuvius, notorious alone for his life of criminality
in this city under moral siege, that he might the more intently
convert their fevered minds to Carthage, urged them to demand
an equal share in the highest roles of government, alternate tenure
of the consulship with Rome, demands he knew full well she would
refuse - he harboured no desire for such concessions to be won!
For should the men of Rome refuse to share the curule throne
with equal dignity or witness the rods of office in joint hands,
there stood in view before their eyes a man to avenge this slight.
So then a hand-picked embassy now speeds their words to Rome.
One Virrius was their leader, a man of all surpassing eloquence,
but base of birth and a *non pareil* in the use of violence.
He scarce had poured forth in full the impious demands
of an insensate mob before the full packed senate house,
inflamed their ears with words that swelled with pride,
when in united rage from all that gathering of senators
arose an angry roar of, "No!" Then each upbraided him
and their competing voices shook the fabric of the house.

And then Torquatus spoke, his countenance a noble match
for ancestors severe, "Have you the nerve to bring such words
from Capua to the walls once built by Romulus – the walls
which neither Carthage nor its general did dare attack
despite Cannae? Did never the story reach your ears of how when
the men of Latium made similar demands upon the Capitol
it was not with words or arguments, but by the force of a stern

right hand he was repulsed, the man whose arrogant mouth
had brought their demands was flung through the temple doors
headlong and with such force his body tumbled and spun
to dash against the savage rocks and under the gaze of Jupiter
he paid the price for his grim and impious words with death.
Behold! I am descended from the man who hurled that orator
from the Thunderer's seat and as consul, no weapon to hand,
defended the capitol!" Enraged he shook his fist in the face
of the envoys, preparing to emulate his ancestor's deeds,
when Fabius, seeing his actions increase towards violence,
then interrupted him, grinding his teeth in frustration, "For shame!
A consul's seat is vacant, emptied by the storms of war.
Which one of you do you think to place upon that throne?
What man will you set in Paulus' place? Or, Virrius, does your
lot set you in place before all others, the senate consenting ?
Will the purple hasten you now to match our archetypal Brutus?
Go, fool, go whither you intend! Let perfidious Carthage hold
dominion over you!" In the midst of this, the fiery speech of Fabius,
Marcellus, incapable of containing his anger with angry groans,
proclaimed aloud his violent rage in thundering voice,
"How come such sluggish tolerance inhibits now your mind,
or is your brain confused by the turbine blasts of war, Varro?
For how can you as consul still endure these misbegotten dreams?
And will you not drive headlong these miscreants from this shrine
and out the city's gates and so compel these half-men to learn
the nature of a consul's power, a man elected in the right
and proper Roman way. As a race never sober and soon
to perish, I bid you take your leave of the city - and quickly now!
A Roman general and army before the very walls of Capua will give
as is right, our appropriate response." Then all the senators stood
and at once with clamorous shout did threaten the men of Capua,
who hastily then themselves made their way out from the gates
of the temple, while Virrius, enraged by the shock of such
a firm rejection did mouth the name of Hannibal, Hannibal!
Next Fulvius (a man whose prophetic gifts ensured great fame
to come, before whose eyes already loomed the sight of Capua
destroyed) spoke out, "Not even if victorious you drive
the Carthaginian general with chains around his neck
to Rome, will you be granted leave to enter the sacred home
of Quirinus: so quickly now direct your steps, I pray,
wherever your sick minds demand." And then in haste the men
of Capua took home the senate's threats and dire response.

Is it your pleasure then, omnipotent Jove, to keep the future hid
in such a cloud of darkness? For there will come a more fortunate age
when pious Rome will take delight in a consul come from Capua
and through force of war and arms the rods of office long denied
shall in confidence be granted to the ambassadors' descendants,
great hearted men[2]. The penalty for their arrogance though will last,

[2] The Social War (90BCE) resulted in the granting of Roman citizenship to the people of Italy, including the men of Capua, who therefore were eligible to stand for the consulship.

and Capua will not despatch their citizens to vote at Rome before
the colony at Carthage does the same[3]. However that may be,
the words and deeds of the senate were revealed by Virrius,
who cleverly mingling truth with lies gave his troubled countrymen
a fatal summons to war. The impassioned youth of Capua craved
arms, arms and war and Hannibal! Then from all sides the mob
together rushed to summon the Carthaginians. They celebrate
the mighty deeds of the Punic youth, how he overcame the Alps
to share the fame of Hercules and in his journey crossed the peaks
that were the neighbours of the gods, and how, victorious,
he dammed the river Po with stacks of Roman dead, made thick
Lake Trasimene with Roman blood and gore, endowed
the Trebia with eternal notoriety, and how he himself alone
in single combat despatched the leaders of the Roman force,
both Paulus and Flaminius, to join the shades in Tartarus.
They remembered as well the sack of Saguntum in his youth,
the Pyrenees traversed and the Ebro, and his father's rites,
also the boyhood oath he swore to his sire to wage eternal war
on Rome. Alone among so many leaders lost in bloody strife
or fell in the battle line, he stood amidst the carnage safe,
untouched by any shaft. When we may join our hands with him,
this hero, and by god's providence make with him a firm alliance,
shall Capua endure the hybris and vainglory of an enfeebled folk,
endure, no doubt, the tyrannical dominion of the city of Rome
which insists on denying us the consulship and equal rights?
For Varro is held by them the more deserving of that lofty role,
that the consul's purple might make his flight the more conspicuous.

Amidst such vaunting talk they prepared to choose by lot and send
ambassadors to seek to join as allies with the Carthaginians,
but Decius, a credit to his native Capua, alone refused to put aside
from his indomitable heart his firm intent. And when he was received
into the gathering's midst – for he was not able to procrastinate –
and said, "Citizens, are you about to violate the oaths our fathers made,
alliance make with a sacrilegious man condemned for a similar crime
by the gods? How come such egregious forgetfulness of duty's path?
A fine and glorious thing it is among the great, both men and states,
to keep good faith with those distressed. It is now the time to go to war
in Rome's defence, to set in motion our battle line and colours both,
while their commonwealth's at risk and their wounds demand aid.
The time for duty is now, when fortune fails and when harsh Fortune
demands our aid. For simply to favour those whose fortune is good
does no credit to the great of heart. So come! Be there for them!
I know their hearts and minds are like to gods and never despair
in perilous times. Believe you me, they tolerate Cannae, the lake
of Trasimene, and noble Paulus' unforgettable demise. These were
the men who by main force drove off the foe that did besiege
our city walls and snatched our city, Capua, from beneath the yoke
of Samnites' tyranny, these the men who framed for you, that peril past,

[3] C. Gracchus settled a colony at Carthage in 122 BCE.

a constitution, and put a stop to hostilities with the Sidicinian men.
Such friends you now desert? For such new friends? Shall I, a man
of Trojan blood, whose father Capys[4] bequeathed to us our sacred rites,
was kin to mighty Iulus, whose name derived from Jupiter himself –
shall such a man as I consort with semi-human Nasimonians,
or brutal Garamantes, a feral match in savagery with wild beasts,
and pitch my tent as neighbour to some native of Marmarica?
Endure to serve a general whose sword usurps a treaty's ties
and justice, whose claims to fame are solely based on gore?
The gods forfend! Nor right nor wrong are so confused by Decius
that he can choose this course. No greater gift does Nature grant –
and grudgingly at that - to humankind than when the jaws of death
gape wide we have the sovereign power to leave a life too hard."
These fruitless arguments did Decius waste on heedless ears.

And so the chosen delegation made a treaty with the Carthaginian.
Already a numerous troop of Autoles, sent in advance by Hannibal,
had arrived with din and disturbance both, while the man himself
was making haste in moving his major force across the plains.
Then Decius, "Now, men, the hour and now the critical time! To me!!
It is time for Capua to do with righteous hand a deed both worthy
of herself and my command. Let the barbarous Carthaginians die!
Each man make haste to seize the prize of glory's crown. If Hannibal
prepares to enter, pile up the dead to block his access to the gates,
atone for your crime with the sword! Your own blood spilt alone
will cleanse your unclean minds from the stains of shame and guilt."

And while he spoke these words that no man heard and then rejoiced,
the enemy learned of Decius' harsh and fierce initiative and Hannibal's
heart grew big, swelled pregnant with a great excess of rage
as he stood by the city walls and ordered a selected band of men
to make haste and bring grim Decius to his tent, a man whose harsh sense
of duty, whose faithful heart and desire for the right, whose mind,
worth more than Capua itself, enabled him to stand both fearless and firm
to front with visage grim the Carthaginian's ranting threats,
respond indeed to Hannibal's demands with bitter answers of his own.
The leader then of Carthage railed at this man who spurned the ranks
and swords of Africa, raised high his angry voice to denounce him,
"With Paulus and Flaminius dead I am confronted by this madman now,
this Decius whose wish to bandy words with me bespeaks a crazed
desire for a glorious death. Snatch up your standards, captains, and
make haste! For I am of a mind to learn if, despite this Decius, the town
of Capua will open up for me, as did the very Alps when first I marched
on Italy, the Alps that thrust their peaks to pierce the sky itself, were trod
but once before and that by a god[5]." The general's face grew dark, suffused
with blood, while from his eye there flashed a frenzied show of fiery rage;
the spittle burst from his mouth as his breathless lungs expressed
from deep within dire murmuring speechless and incoherent sounds.

[4] Capys was the son of Assaracus and grandfather of Aeneas and traditionally held to be the founder of Capua.
[5] Hercules.

And so he entered the city, accompanied by the senators, while all
the common folk rushed out at once to see the face of Hannibal,
who gave vent to pent up rage and vicious storms of temper.

In Decius too his heart and mind were inflamed by the current risks,
as perfectly he realized the time was well nigh due the when he may
himself, although unarmed, outdo the glory of the undefeated general.
He did not flee nor seek to hide away with his household gods,
but rather lived the free man's passive life, his face quite unafraid,
as if lord Hannibal had never come within the city gates of Capua,
when tragedy struck - a band of troops, savage and emboldened
by their arms seized Decius and set him before the feet of Hannibal,
enthroned on high, whence looms the victor and thunders words
ferocious, "Do you propose alone to support the ruin that is Rome,
recalling her from certain death? Madman! Are you the one to snatch
from me the great gods' gifts so great? Was I kept safe by them
to fall at last to Decius' uncertain hand? To Decius, the weakling,
a man to whom no woman even, raised within the Tyrian shores
of our native Carthage would ever bow the knee! Come then,
men, bind this man, this man so great of heart, in chains he so
deserves! For why should Hannibal endure his calumnies?"
These were his words - but yet his insults knew no end:
just so the lion, launched upon the necks of cattle beasts,
imposes himself as victor and in a show of monstrous rage
growls, roars, sinks heavy and deep his claws to cling thereon,
to devour the still panting bull from this vantage point.
But Decius, as they bound him fast, " Yes, quickly," he said,
"bind up the chains! A fitting sign of Hannibal's intrusion here!
A fitting prize for treachery! And so Decius falls - in short
a worthy sacrifice! For it is not right to worship Hannibal
with slaughtered beasts – for he delights in human blood.
Observe his true right hand! Observe the treaty made! Nor yet
the temples nor the senate house have opened their doors, but he
commands already the prisons opened wide. Proceed, and match
your earlier crimes with similar deeds. Reports beneath the earth
will tell me of your fall, crushed by the plunging walls of Capua!"
He was allowed to say no more. His head was shrouded in black
and hooded. Angry he was dragged away, his countrymen as witnesses.

This minor triumph soothed the victor's heart at the last,
he cast his eyes in calm and gladness about the cityscape
and temples, drinking in each and every detail there:
who built these walls, how many men were under arms?
how many talents of silver and gold were set aside for war?
The quality of the bridled cavalry, how well were they
supplied with infantry? They show off their lofty citadel,
the Stellatian plain[6], so bountiful in Ceres' benefits.
Already Phoebus was driving the day towards its close
with his weary team, the shades of eventide were gathering

[6] Central Campania, rich agricultural land.

and little by little overtook his chariot on its way to the sea.
The citizens then prepared a traditional feast and festal day
throughout the city, with tables erected for regal celebration.
Himself, now honoured with the sacred trappings of the gods,
was feted on high, his couch resplendent from afar, all draped
with purple. The serving slaves were far from being just
a single group; some were detailed to set the dishes, more
to fuel the fires, others still to serve the cups of wine.
Still more were set to proffer food. Encrusted cups
of weighty antique gold engraved gleamed from the board.
Flames snatched away the night, the lofty halls were alive
with the soft murmuration of shuffling slaves. The men
of Carthage, unused to lavish feasts, drank in with eyes
amazed this unmatched spectacle of arrogant wealth,
while Hannibal himself ate in silence, condemned the need
for such display, that tables, easily served, craved such a crowd,
until, his hunger banished, Bacchus' gifts of wine relaxed
his savage mood: and then at last his countenance took on
again a joyous look, more pressing cares now set aside.

Then Teuthras, a citizen of Cumae, made the Euboean[7] lyre
resound, and appeased with his musical song ears made deaf
by the blast in battle of the trumpet's harsh and warlike notes.
For of Chaos he sang, *quondam* blind mass of starless waste,
no place for any dawning, but a place, a world devoid of light.
He sang how the God had separated off the waters of the deep
and set in place the sphere of earth, fixed centre of the whole,
and how he granted the gods Olympus' peak as dwelling place;
revealed the uncorrupted centuries of father Saturn's reign.[8]
Now sang he of Jove and of his sweet, but secretive affairs
and his bedding of Electra, Atlas' child – whence Dardanus,
a worthy son of parents divine. He gave Jupiter, the thunderer,
a grandson, Erichthonius, a noble son of noble stock indeed.
Thence of Tros and Ilus and in the long line of succession next
Assaracus, and, no less in reputation nor in heroic deeds,
of Capys - how he had first named for himself the walls of Capua.
The men of Carthage and Capua both applauded the bard
with equal praise. The general himself first poured from his cup
an offering of wine to honour Capys' name in solemn ritual.
The rest of the company followed suit and spilled the juice
of Bacchus on the tables, all growing heated with the wine.

Meantime and while the company of Carthage turned themselves
to pleasures – and yet there was one young man worthy of note,
and I shall pass on your enterprise and gladly record your fame,
although you failed in your enterprise, the product of a noble mind –
the single mind as yet unsullied by wine and disarmed by drink's
toxicity. Yes, Perolla was turning in his secret heart a noble plan,
to challenge Hannibal to fight and kill him in a deadly duel.

[7] Cumae was a colony founded from Euboea.
[8] See Duff's note, p.122, "*Ll. 453-458 were rightly transferred to this place by Summers.*

What made his sacred deed the more remarkable, he was
Pacuvius' son, but had condemned his father's treacherous designs[9],
the whom, weighed down with various dishes and with tardy step
abandoning the banquet hall, his son accompanied, fell in behind,
and thus the chance was given to disclose his thoughts, lay bare
his new laid plans when, the hall behind them, a vacant space
revealed itself behind the house, " Now listen to a stratagem
that is worthy of ourselves and Capua," he said and revealed,
his toga pulled aside, that he was armed; "My purpose is to end
with this sword this war and, as victor over Hannibal, give
his severed head to Jupiter in Rome. For this will be the sword
to ratify once more the treaty fouled long since by treachery.
If though your elder age cannot play audience to such a spectacle,
and trembles at an enterprise beyond its played out time,
retire then safely to your household gods and leave your son
to his plans For you believe that Hannibal is supreme among men,
and equal to gods, but how much more repute will your son's
name now accrue than Hannibal's!" Dark fire shot then from
his eyes, and the young man's mind was already engaged in war,
when his father, whose stricken ears could scarce sustain
the massive strain of such an enterprise, at once fell prostrate,
and all atremble thickly planted fearful kisses on his son's feet,
"By what remains to me of life and by the rights a father due,
and by your safety, son, so much more dear to me than mine,
abandon your intent, I beg, so I may not see my hospitality
made foul with blood, my drinking cups replete with gore,
my tables overturned in the throes of a fatal brawl.
Will you withstand that man, whom neither battle lines
nor city walls nor yet cities themselves can withstand
when his forehead and face are lit with coruscating flames,
will you withstand his thunderbolts, if at the sight of your sword
he summons that dreadful cry that routs battalions on the battlefield?
You are deceived should you believe he sits to dine unarmed.
The hero's wars successfully pursued, the majesty of victims slain
in hordes do arm the man. Should you confront the general,
you will confront Cannae and Trebia, the dead of Trasimene
and wonder at the mighty shade of Paulus set before your face.
And more! You think his men will stay their torpid hands as they
recline close by to such a spectacle? I beg you, spare yourself,
let go your plans. For they must bring defeat and death. Do not
the savage chains that fettered Decius teach restraint of rage?"

And so the father's words, but when he saw his son aflame
with a lust for greater notoriety and deaf to his fears,
"I make no more demands, return your steps to the feast;
and let us hurry there," he said. "Your task at hand is not
to stab the Carthaginian youth as they protect their king:
Make trial of your hand on this my throat! If it is your wish
to stab the Carthaginian you must first direct your blade

[9] See Book 11, vv. 55ff.

through my entrails. Do not despise my tardy and aged self:
I shall interpose my limbs and wrench aside the sword
you would not yield with my own death." Then floods of tears,
and Hannibal was saved by the mighty providence of gods
to face the arms of Scipio. Nor did Fate allow such a deed
accomplished by a foreign hand. Most splendid was Perolla
in his rage and fit to share the glory of such a daring deed –
and yet how much of praise he lost, abandoning his intent,
a man whose aspirations were so high! They then made haste
to return to the feast and smoothed the creases on their brow,
until deep sleep brought calm and an end to the feasting of men.

Next day's dawn prepared to drive out the steeds of Phaëthon,
his speedy chariot already bright beneath the surface of the sea,
and the son of mighty Hamilcar[10] had long since been in hard
and careful thought. The fearsome Mago had been told to return
to Carthage and as messenger report to the elders there the sum
of Hannibal's deeds. Booty and prisoners of war were picked
and the spoils of bloody conflict from fallen warriors stripped
as offerings to the gods above in thanks for a successful war.
One more of Hannibal's concerns – poor wretched Decius -
was sent to the African shores to await his victor's leisured wrath,
had not Jupiter from high in pity for the young man's wretched plight
diverted his course towards Cyrene, Battus' ancient settlement.
Here Ptolemy, Egypt's Macedonian king seized him from his escorts'
threats, loosening at once the weighty shackles from his neck.
And this same land that had saved his life at last received
his bones, inviolate now, to rest in peace in their silent tomb.

This desirous time in Capua then encouraged Venus to corrupt
all unaware the Carthaginian morale as they indulged delights
illicit, taming their rampant hearts with luxurious excess.
And Venus bad her boys to fire their random darts at will,
shoot silent flames of passion to infect the Carthaginians' hearts.
With a sweet smile Venus addressed her boys, "Let cruel Juno
go her way and (It's no surprise, for who are we?) driven by
success look down on us. For she is strong in hands and thews!
From boyish bows we tentatively loose our miniature shafts,
while no blood flows from the wounds which they inflict.
But, come and act, my warriors, I pray! The time is ripe! Attend!
Make burn the youth of Carthage with your silent shafts.
Their battle line of warriors must be brought down by sex,
much drunkenness and sleep, a force impervious to swords,
to conflagration and the war god's chariots at speed unleashed.
Let Hannibal drown deep his inwards in luxurious excess,
and shameless rest himself upon a fine embroidered couch,
nor yet resist the need to drown his hair in Assyrian pomades.
That man was wont to boast of sleeping underneath a winter sky –
let him now choose the night time comforts of sleep beneath a roof.

[10] Hannibal.

Let him put aside his way of often taking food while saddled up
and helmeted, his horse at speed, and let him learn to dedicate
his peaceful days to wine. Then in his cups and after the feast
let him delight in the charming lyre, and pass his drowsy nights
in sleep, or sleepless spend his nights in honouring my rites."

On Venus' word her playful troops did beat their snowy wings
and launched themselves from heaven's lofty heights.
Young men of Carthage then felt the flaming shafts of love,
and all alike their hearts grew fevered by that volley of darts.
They hanker after Bacchus' gifts and banqueting and the songs
that sweetly flowed from the Muse's lyre. No spirited horse
now raised a sweat on the open plain, no javelin hurled through
the breezes now exercised, nor works their naked arms.
Warm baths made gentle by soothing flames now coddles their
indolent limbs, while their stern discipline wretchedly erodes.
The general, infected himself by young Cupid's seductive breath
heaps high the banquet halls and repeatedly seeks the hospitality
of willing hosts, and little by little he grows degenerate, discards
ancestral ways, his will and mind corrupted by insidious shafts.
So Capua now is called a second Carthage and honoured equally,
his second fatherland, while the genius unscathed by victory,
is shaken to its very roots by the hedonistic lure of luxury and vice.
Nor did the Campanians set limits to their own luxurious style of life,
immersed in lust; forever feasting they strive through various arts
in competition to set apart their banqueting with plays performed,
just as Memphis on the Nile resounds always to the lotus flute, a match
in revels to Canopus in Egypt, named for Menelaus' Spartan helm.
But Teuthras most of all to Hannibal's delight now filled his ears
with streams of dulcet vocal song, and now with instrumental play.
And, when he saw how the Carthaginian general admired the sound
of the fingered strings, he began to eulogize the proud achievements
of Apollo's lyre, and harmonized his singing voice to keep in tune
with the voice of the singing instrument itself, his voice a voice
that might surpass in beauty the final strains of the dying swan.
And these the songs he chose from many to delight the banqueters,
"Once long ago, a wonder to say, the men of Greece heard the sound
of the tortoise-shell harp, a song that charmed the building blocks
of stone to follow and willingly array themselves as battlements.
Amphion strummed his lyre which raised the very walls of Thebes:
stonework surmounted the battlements summoned before, while he
played, ordering enchanted towers to rise immense above the walls.
Another lyre that calmed the stormy deep with melody
both held in thrall the seals and captivated shape-shifting Proteus,
escorted Arion as he rode, perched on the sea creature's back,
and still another shaped with song the minds of heroes
in Pelion's cave and the spirit and soul of great hearted Achilles -
that lyre, beloved of Cheiron, which, its strings being struck, could calm
the tempestuous anger of the seas and of dark Avernus itself.
The strings that were struck beside the Strymon's northern stream
by the hands of Orpheus were heard by the gods and deservedly shine

bright, glowing amidst the heavens, a shimmering constellation there.
Of him the Muse Calliope, his mother, accompanied by her sisterhood
of Muses, also stood in awe - of Orpheus and his enchanting voice.
And as he modulated his bewitching songs nor the ridges of Pangaeus
nor of Haemon, sacred to Mars, could stay still, nor yet farthest Thrace.
Wild beasts accompanied the dancing woods, the streams the hills,
forgetful of her sweetings' nest the bird stopped, changed her course
mid flight and hung suspended, a captive in the sky's still airs.
And more when the Argo, beached at Pagasae[11], refused to launch
upon the waters blue, as yet uncharted, and venture into lands
unknown the sea itself, seduced by Orpheus' siren song,
uplifted the sacred vessel's stern. The bard Bistonius soothed
with song the gloomy underworld of shades, the crackling fires
of Acheron, stopped Sisyphus' reversing boulder in its tracks.
Ah, the cruelty of the Ciconian wives! The Thracian harridans,
and Rhodope, condemned by the gods! The Hebrus swept
his severed head in its rushing flood past its banks to the sea.
And as swift waves conveyed the head, bereft of neck ,
sea beasts of a sudden emerged from the swell and danced
to the gentle sound of his song across the surface of the sea."
So Pierian Teuthras with Castalian song melted at that time
the stern hearts of the Carthaginian troops tough tempered in war.

Meanwhile now favourable breezes carried Mago home
to Libyan shores. And wreathed in victorious laurel his ship
made its way into the longed for haven: captured booty, arms
flashed brightly from afar and gleamed from her lofty prow.
The cries of sailors long since resonating across the open seas
now saturated and re-echoed round the far sounding shores,
and as the crew pulled back on its oars hard up to their chests,
the sea erupted in foam, broken by the thrust of a hundred blades.
The people, eager to snatch a fleeting joy, entered now the midst
of the surf, and with a mighty cry the crowd, inspired by their luck,
competed to celebrate their new found delight and good fortune –
lord Hannibal a match for the gods! The mothers and all their
small children, taught to rejoice by those same mothers' advice,
the senior ranks of citizens, the senate – the total population
deemed Hannibal worthy of honours divine and oxen sacrificed.
So Mago returned home, and entered the city gates to the sound
of his brother's fame and praise. The senate rushed to convene,
the packed senate house overflowed as all the members arrived.

Then Mago venerated the gods in the ancient ancestral ways,
and said, "I declare that famous Mars and the wealth on which
the land of Italy depends are broken both, in which task I had
no small part to play. The gods smiled on our battle hymns.
There is a place made famous by the reputation of king Diomede,
possessed upon a time in an age long past by Daunus of Apulia;
with currents swift the river, Aufidus, floods throughout and round

[11] The Argo's Thessalian port of departure.

the plains, and with its standing waters cuts off the fertile land,
to confront at last the Adriatic's waves with a deafening roar
and force back the retreating billows into the opening sea.
Here Varro and Paulus, a name much honoured among the names
of Latium, on whom, as generals, supreme command devolved,
while scarce the shades of the darkling night had been dispersed,
had invaded the battle field and, with their armour shining far,
and added a further lustre to the Dawn's ascending radiance.
In answer we moved our standards against their lines. A keen
desire for the battle much lusted for drove my brother on.
The earth itself shook and the heavens thundered above.
Hannibal dammed the river, hid the plain with the warrior dead,
than whom our earth had spawned no greater leader in times
of war. I saw in the turbine blast of war the whole of Italy turn tail,
dispersed across the plain by the sound of Hannibal in battle mode,
presenting their backs to him alone. I witnessed Varro flee,
his speeding horse spurred on, his coward's arms abandoned,
while, great hearted Paulus, I witnessed your fall, your body pierced
shot through with shafts, as you fell above your butchered dead.
That day's butcher's bill avenged our dead amidst the islands of Aegatia,
avenged the servile settlement. We could not wish to wish for more
than the hand of god bestowed that day: for if another such day
in future dawned, then Carthage alone would reign supreme
over all mankind, her rule be recognized throughout the world.
These rings are proof of slaughter, which tokens Roman noblemen
are used to wear on their left hands." There was then poured
before the wondering crowd a flood of shining golden rings
which proved the truth of his claims, an illustrious mass of gold.
He then resumed, "Now Rome is undermined and on the brink
extreme, a city ripe for overthrow, to be razed to the ground.
Let us do our utmost, then, " he said, " refresh our forces, worn
out by so much chance, and let the generous treasury gape to pay
the needs of war. Our elephants which so terrify the men of Rome
are failing, and our supply chains are stretched to breaking point."

And while he told his tale, he turned toward Hanno[12] a look
of fierce disdain, a man long since enraged by Hannibal's fame
as it increased, his mind distorted by his envious savagery,
"At last do you approve our handiwork, accomplishments?
Have I the right to refuse to bend my knee as a slave to Rome?
It pleases you to betray once more lord Hannibal? Your heart
is black and venomous, flooded with the bitter gall of jealousy!
So at the last be silent, unhappy man, convinced by so much
success, so many trophies. That hand which you would now
betray to Rome to brutalize has filled both rivers and banks
and lakes and battlefields vast with clotted Roman blood."
So Mago, and his warm reception cheered his heart and mind.

In answer Hanno, his heart provoked by rage and jealousy both,

[12] See, Book 2, vv.276ff.

“ These taunts hold no surprises – products of the fevered mind
of an insane youth! He swells with arrogance, and one may soon
perceive his brother’s temperament and feeble polemical style.
So he may not believe my mind is changed by his idle vapouring,
my aim is now to sue for peace, to lay down our arms - defiled
by the breach of a treaty, and so avoid a war that can only bring
destruction upon us. I beg you rather to weigh upon the scales
his proposition; only one decision remains for us to conclude.
He begs for arms, men, gold, warships, all kinds of supplies -
war elephants! If defeated he could not have begged for more.
We have soaked the fields of Italy with Roman blood and gore,
and Latium lies prostrate on the field. At length then let us set
aside our careful woes, victorious conqueror, and take our ease
in the fatherland. Let us not further make empty our homes,
so often emptied before by the demands of rapacious war.
Now, now indeed, I say, - and may my prophecies prove false -
I pray, my mind be the plaything of mere worthless auguries:
the final fatal day is close at hand! I understand Rome’s black heart
and prophecy fresh rage, begotten from former calamities.
It is you, it is you that I fear, Cannae! Dip standards in defeat,
and be so bold to try – come on! – demand that peace be made:
it will not be granted. Their pain plots a greater pain for us.
Far greater than their own. As victors they will treat for peace
more readily than as victims. Tell me, then, since you proclaim
with pride and inspire the ears of the ignorant mob with a storm
of foaming spin, claiming your brother to be an equal to Mars
in time of war, and a natural born leader created second to none
in history past, just why has he not as yet to this very day
set eyes on the city walls and battlements of Romulus?
It is clear we must snatch from their mothers’ knees mere boys
to carry weighty and as yet unwieldy arms against an enemy!
Shall we on his command alone construct a thousand brazen ships
of war, is all of Africa to be scoured to provide him elephants,
so that your brother Hannibal may further prolong his command
and years of conflict, protract his reign until his judgment day?
And you, citizens – since we are not embroiled in a hidden trap -
do not lay waste your pleasant homes, but rather set a cap upon
the military might and wealth of potentates! For peace is the best
of all the gifts man knows and peace alone is worth much more
than a thousand military victories, peace alone can keep us safe,
ensure civic equality, so let it then be summoned back at last
to Carthage. Let the reproach of treachery flee in haste your city,
Sidonian Dido. If Hannibal still nurtures such a grievous lust
for war, will not disarm his troops, nor surrender still his sword
to his native land on her demand, I urge you – do not supply
his fury! Let brother Mago take this message back to Hannibal!”

As he mustered further arguments (he had not as yet assuaged
his rage with rhetoric) a roar of opposition confounded him,
“If the pride of Libya, yes, Hannibal, a man insuperable in war
inspires your rage, shall we abandon him all but victorious,

at the very winning post? Shall we not supply his needs?
Shall one man's jealousy delay a triumph now all but won?"
They voted for the munitions that the pursuit of war demanded
and Mago witnessed their vote of confidence in absent Hannibal.
It pleased them next to send supplies to the land of Spain,
though spite and jealousy belittled Hannibal's immortal deeds,
and thought to reduce the chances for his fame to grow.

Punica: Book 12

Silius Italicus

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Book 12

After leaving Capua Hannibal and his somewhat demoralized troops suffer defeats at Naples, Cumae and Puteoli (1-103). Hannibal visits Baiae and other places (103-157) then proceeds to attack Nola, but is unsuccessful, being beaten off by Marcellus (158-294). Roman morale improves and the Romans are encouraged by an oracle from Delphi (295-341). The scene switches to the war in Sardinia: Torquatus is victorious over Hampsagoras. The poet Ennius is praised (342-419). Hannibal sacks various cities and attacks Tarentum, but not the citadel (420-448). Back at Capua he defends the city against a Roman blockade, defeating two Roman armies. The body of Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus is buried by Hannibal (449-478). Unsuccessful at Capua he marches on Rome (479-540) causing near panic in the city (541-557). After making a reconnaissance of the fortifications of Rome he is driven back to his camp by Fulvius Flaccus, freshly returned from Campania (558-573). Jupiter interrupts two attempts to join battle by sending a powerful storm (574-667). His third attempt is frustrated by Juno, acting on instructions from Jupiter (668-730) which causes rejoicing in Rome (731-752).

Already harsh winter had hidden his glacial head beneath the earth,
his temples rich in storms, his brow lowering with clouds, harbinger
on high of southern fronts, while healthful spring now charmed
the meadows with gentle warmth and balmy, soft and western winds.
The Carthaginian force broke out from Capua and with terror gone
harassed the neighbourhood: just so the snake conceals itself
in winter when the Thracian peaks are gripped by the north wind's blast,
but finally, then, its hibernation done, unfolds its length from its lair,
and, renewed, it glistens in the welcome sun, lifts up its shining head
and breathes out toxic venom from its uplifted and threatening jaws.
When Hannibal's Afric standards glittered across the landscape,
all was in dread abandoned and under panic's promptings men hid
behind their ramparts, all hope of salvation lost, and in their dread
were waiting all expectant for the enemy behind their city walls.

But that same robust strength which had breached the very Alps
to make clear a way for Hannibal's arms, as well annexed the Trebia
and polluted with butchered Roman blood Etruscan Trasimene,
was present no more: their torpid limbs were flaccid now through
debilitating luxury, strong wines and the allurements of sleep.
Men once used to suffering freezing nights beneath an hostile sky,
weighed down by their breastplates and despising sheltering tents,
when storm clouds erupted, unloading bitter blasts of winter hail,
while even in the night their swords and shields were not removed,
nor yet their quivers and spears – they wore their arms like limbs:
Now though their helmet was a burden and light-weight shields
appeared too heavy. Javelins cast no longer caused the air to hum.

The first to feel the heavy hand of Hannibal's renewed hostilities
was Parthenope[1], not overly rich, nor despised for cowardice;
its harbour attracted Hannibal who desired a secure anchorage

[1] The city of Naples, the place of Silius' retirement.

in which the fleet en route from Carthage might find safe haven.
That city now is a place of peace, providing leisure and hospitality
to the Muses, and a style of life exempt from grievous cares.
One of the Sirens, Acheloüs' daughter, Parthenope, gave the place
her famous name, whose songs once long time ruled the waves,
when, a bane to wretched sailors, her voice sang sweet death.
The Carthaginian attempted to storm the city walls from the rear –
the sea defended the city's front – but he was unable to break
a passage through, despite his great force, and frustrated
and unsuccessful, belittled in his enterprise, he maintained
a constant assault upon the shuttered gates with battering rams.
The victor of Cannae was kept standing before a fortified city of Greeks,
ineffectual! However, in the event his cautious planning he proved
correct, choosing not at once to march on the fortifications of Rome
after soaking the kingdoms of Daunia[2] with floods of Italian blood.
"You claimed that I was too slow and knew not how to follow up
on what I had achieved, because I did not allow you to attempt
the city walls of Rome, hard on the heels of that former victory.
So enter now and within these city halls, defended by but Greeks
serve me the victory feast you said you would set in Jupiter's shrine!"
He scorned his men and shamed at the prospect of future ignominy,
if, foiled in his attempt, he should retire from this first invested city,
he dared all and began to sharpen his weaponry with stratagems.
But suddenly flames flashed from the walls and from the circuit
of the lofty battlements there flew an unexpected hail of weaponry.
Just as when the golden bird of Jupiter has hidden her young
upon the topmost crag and if a snake with stealthy strength
assails the heights to terrify the nest with gaping jaws nearby,
the she bird flies swooping circuits round the nest and attacks
the snake with beak and talons wont to carry thunderbolts.

At length exhausted Hannibal bethought to shift his base
to the neighbouring port of Cumae and there challenge fate
by the move, and by his activities forestall a loss of face.
However, Gracchus, the city's governor, a safeguard more
sure than the walls themselves, held them at bay and stopped
them camping by the gates, allowed them again no entry there.
Then Hannibal in near despair explored the country thereabout
on swift horseback and once again with exhortations strong
of glories past urged on his troops: "By all the gods!" he cried,
"What end is set for tarrying so before Greek cities, oblivious,
my men, of your deeds? What limit? A bigger obstacle than the Alps
confronts you now, I suppose… are my orders to conquer peaks
that pound the sky? Yet if another similar land was set before
you, other cliffs that rose to the stars, would you not go forth
and led by Hannibal carry your arms on high? Do Cumae's
ramparts and walls hold you still in gaping awe and Gracchus,
who dare not move outside his gates? I have but little doubt
myself at all that all the peoples of this world will attribute

[2] One of Silius' names for Italy, see Bk.1.293.

to chance and the vagaries of chance the fruits of your past
labours sore. By the lake of Trasimene's lake and the gods'
favours there, by the Trebia and sacked ashes of Saguntum
I beseech you be worthy of the fame which is your legacy
for posterity and recall to your hearts the victory of Cannae.

So with these words the general sought thus to enliven and
make firm again hearts sapped by luxury and easy idleness.
And while examining here the approaches to the town he sees
a temple shining on the summit of the citadel and Virrius,
harsh governor of proud Capua[3], made clear its origins:
"It is not of our time," he said, "as you may now suspect:
for older hands constructed it. The story goes that Daedalus
in fear of king Minos' reign discovered a way to escape
from Crete and leave no sign for Minos in pursuit across
the world's extent, and dared to lift himself on alien wings
to the sky above and demonstrate to man the art of flight.
Balancing his body, suspended in the midst of the clouds,
he sailed on and the novel winged beast affrighted the gods.
He also taught his son, Icarus, to vie with the flight of birds
on counterfeit constructed wings, but then he saw him fall,
as the wax in his ill-fated wings melted and failed, and strike
the turbulent seas below; and while he gave way to his grief
he struck of a sudden his breast with his fists and steered,
all wretched and unknowing, his course he knew not where.
And grateful for his journey through the clouds he founded here
a temple sacred to Apollo and shed at last his audacious wings."

So Virrius spoke, but Hannibal was counting now the days
of idleness, no battles fought and felt shame at his slothfulness.
He groaned at his lack of success and with a backward glance
at Cumae, undefeated still, prepared to vent his vengeance on Puteoli.
Here too though now the sea and the work of the defending force
and Puteoli's massive city walls frustrated his attempts.
And while enduring efforts constrained his men as they strove
to break through the walls, he himself took in the wondrous
sights afforded at once by both the land and waters thereabouts.

The leading men of Capua attended him: one indicates the origin
of Baiae's name for its thermal springs, disclosing that a member
of Ulysses' crew bestowed his name upon the waters there. And yet
another, recording how once before the Lucrine lake had born
the title Cocytus, praised also the path that Hercules had laid
across the midst of the turgid sea, when Amphitryon's son stole
the cattle beasts of Geryon and parted asunder the waters there.
Another points out that Avernus, once popularly known as Styx[4],
has changed its name and now is celebrated as a healthy spa,

[3] See Bk. 11. 65.

[4] See Duff's note *ad loc.* "Owing to its volcanic nature, the Campanian coast was supposed to be connected with the nether world; hence the infernal rivers, Styx and Acheron, were placed here also."

but once before it was a dreadful place of gloomy woods and black
shade, death trap to overflying birds it used to vomit lethal airs
to suffuse the sky and, made holy then with Stygian rites, it kept
its sacred rituals intact throughout the local settlements.
Hard by there is a swamp, which, the story goes, unseals a route
to the streams of Acheron and opens up its darkest depths
to reveal in its stagnant maw horrendous chasms in the earth,
through which from time to time sunlight affrights the dead.
Close by through ages long the homes and city languished the
of the troglodyte Cimmerians that reeked beneath infernal clouds
in ashen shade through everlasting Tartarean nights perpetual -
so said the guides of Hannibal. Then they showed to him the fields
exhaling gouts of eternal sulphurous flames and blistering pitch.
The earth itself breathes out miasmic clouds of vapours black
and heated to its very marrow has seethed long-time with fire,
emitting dire Stygian blasts from Hell to the pristine skies
above and gives birth from her ruptured womb to dread
sibilant screams. The fire-god Mulciber[5] groans to free himself
from the sea and with menacing threats and melancholic moans
he disembowels the shattered earth and with seismic complaint
erodes the very mountainsides to bring them sliding down.
Men say that the Giants, laid low by the might of Hercules,
make shake the earth that buried them and scorch the fields
about with torrid breath and whenever they threaten to break
their structured bonds the gods in heaven above grow pale[6].
Mt Prochyte stands clear, allotted home of savage Mimas,
hard by stands Inarime, whose weight holds down Iapetus,
erupting dark pyroclastic clouds from his rebellious maw –
his wish, if the chance of escape is granted him, to renew
hostilities and make war again with the gods and Jupiter.
They pointed out to Hannibal the slopes of Mt Vesuvius,
its crater rim of rocks devoured by fire, its chaotic mass
all cast in ruins, its rain of death a match for Aetna's toll.
Also he saw Misenum, named for the Trojan buried there
and Bauli's city and stall, built[7] by Hercules upon the shore.
He wondered at the threatening sea and the unquiet earth.

When Hannibal had seen these sights he returned thence
to the lofty walls of Puteoli and laid waste the heights
Nysaean of Gaurus which delight in the luxuriant vine.
From there he sped his troops in turn to Cumaean Nola:
This town itself is situated on a level plain and the access
is easy enough in itself, but the place is surrounded by
a complex ring of forts, while a lofty rampart protects
the flat ground. Marcellus came to help and bring supplies.
Not a man to stand behind walls, but rather by main force

[5] More commonly known as Vulcanus.
[6] I quote Duff's note *ad loc.* "The Giants were punished for their revolt against the gods by being placed under mountains; and volcanic action is caused by their struggles: Mimas under Prochyte, and Iapetus under Inarime."
[7] Hercules built the place as a home for the oxen of Geryon.

he would defend the town. Seeing the cloud of Carthaginians
across the plain approaching the walls, “To arms,” he cried,
“the bloodthirsty foe is nigh,” and took up arms himself.
At speed his young men attended him to affix the blood
red plume, a vibrant marker of his helmet. Then he roared
as he set his men in place: “You, Nero, will guard the right
hand access of the gate. You, Tullius, pride of Tuscany,
direct your countrymen and the standards of Larinum
to the gate upon the left, but when I give the word unlock
the gates in stealth and with a sudden force debouch a cloud
of missiles across the plain, then when the gates are opened
I will lead the cavalry charge into the very centre of the foe.”
And so Marcellus, as the Carthaginians tried to pull down
the barricades and, ladders cast aside, to breach the walls.

On all sides the trumpets brayed and there arose the din
of man and horse alike, while horns and bugles combined
cacophonous and the armour rang upon embattled troops.
The gates thrown wide a savage stream of horse poured out
to attack in an all unexpected flood the hostile foe -
just so unruly rivers bursts forth from ruptured banks,
and Northern gales propel the waves against sea cliffs,
when winds escape the cave of Aeolus and invade the land.
When Hannibal saw this torrent of men and arms he knew
despair, hopes dashed. The Roman general pressed hard
on his dejected foe and leading on horseback he stooped
to skewer the backs of runaways, urging on his men,
“Come! Onwards! Make haste! The gods are with us, the day
is ours! There lies the road to Capua!” And now he turns again
to Hannibal, “Hold there! Where to so fast? I rail at you,
not, general, at your fleeing men. Stop! We have to hand
a field, arms and Mars. I release our men from slaughter.
Let us put on a show. Marcellus demands single combat!”
The Roman spoke and Hannibal was minded to take up
the challenge for the sake of honour and danger’s delight.

Juno, though, did not observe this episode with placid heart,
but as he rushed towards his doom she altered his intent.
He laboured to recall and hold back his panicking troops,
“Is this the way in which we exit Capua and leave behind
her noxious hospitality? Hold hard, you wretches! You shame
past fame… believe me, take flight now and you may not hope
for salvation today. You deserve the vengeance of all of Italy
to fall upon you, and have prepared by dint of savage Mars
no place in which in defeat you may hope for peace and life.”
His angry cries and voice outdid in savage power the blast
of trumpets to penetrate the stoppered ears of his warriors.

The youngster Pedianus, clad in the armour of Polydamas,
waged fearsome war. He had sprung from Trojan seed
and claimed his lineage from the family of Antenor.

His glory was no less than that of his ancestors and a source
of pride to Timavus' stream, his name beloved in Euganean lands.
Paternal Eridanus and all the series of Venetian tribes and those
rejoicing in Aponus' spring declared him a nonpareil both
in the waging of war, or if his preference was for the Muse
and a peaceful scholar's life, and the easing of his cares
by the music of the lyre. No youth was better known
to Mars, nor known as equally well to lord Apollo.
In hot pursuit of the fleeing Carthaginians he recognized
hard by the helmet and crest stripped from Paulus dead,
a youth was wearing them and taking a proud delight
in the generous gift of his leader. He was a favourite
of Hannibal, one Cinyps, most handsome of all the host,
whose visage glowed with a quite unparalleled charm,
just as shines the ivory and is ever fresh when nourished
by Tibur's breeze, or glows the ear-ring's pure pearl
with wondrous worth, imported from the Red Sea's waves.
When Pedianus saw him in the rearmost ranks prominent
on account of that plume and famous shining helmet, he
charged furiously against him, a sudden image of Paulus
redivivus, vividly arisen from the nether depths to demand
his arms, "Will you dare wear, basest of cowards, the helm
that graced that sacred head, the which your general himself
could not don without inspiring condign punishment divine!
See, Paulus!" He summoned then the hero's ghost to witness
and thrust deep his sharp spear between the fugitive's ribs.
Next, leaping from his horse his right hand snatched away
the consul's plume and helm, stripped Cinyps as he watched…
All beauty was dissolved in death and a Stygian hue suffused
his snowy limbs and all the splendour of his form was lost.
His perfumed hair fell in disarray, his neck's strength gone.
It let drop his head as its marbled column, collapsing, failed.
Even so the Morning Star, returning from Ocean's depth,
shows off itself to Venus with refurbished splendid light,
but yet grows pale if sudden clouds obtrude, becoming dim
in darkling shadows and languishes its failing radiance.
Pedianus his very self was silenced at the sight of that face
revealed, the helmet gone, and checked his frenzy of rage.

Then carrying back the helmet to his comrades' acclaim,
he spurred on his fiery steed which made bloody its bit
with savage foaming bite. Marcellus in the frenzy of arms
and confusion of battle met him and recognizing the prize
declared, "Well done! A deed worthy of ancestral repute!
Well done, Antenor's son! And let us seek to snatch the last
remaining trophy and steal the helm of Hannibal himself !"
In eager haste Marcellus hurled his savage whistling spear
and would have gained his end perhaps had not Gestar met
the shaft and interposed his body to receive the blow himself,
and close by sheltered his leader with his own armoured self.
The weighty spear, athirst for another's blood, transfixed

him, fulfilled its threatened deadly work upon another life.
Now Hannibal rode off at speed, much troubled by this brush
with death, and in a furious rage hastened his path to his camp,
while the whole Carthaginian force turned now its back upon
the battle and fled in uncontrolled and headlong flight.
Their armoured enemies pressed hard, each man keen to slake
his long stifled and frustrated rage and compete in showing off
his bloody sword to the avenging gods and heaven its very self.
That day first taught that which no one before would credit –
not even of the gods – that Hannibal could be held in check
upon the field of Mars. The Romans plundered chariots and men
and elephants. They stripped and took the arms from warriors
while they lived, content to have seen great Hannibal's back
at their spears' point. They match Marcellus with Mars himself
in glorious renown. Escorted he made his triumphant way,
a greater man than when as victor he brought rich spoils to Jove[8].

Then raging Hannibal when he had scarce thrust back his enemy
from his camp, "When and with how much Roman blood shall I
expunge this shame? Did Ausonia chance to witness the sight
of my back in flight?" he cried, "Do you, lord god supreme of all,
consider me, victor of Trebia, deserving of such foul disgrace?"
And you, young men, so long victorious, are now brought low
by the peacetime joys of Capua – I did not disgrace *my* history!
Did not reverse my victorious standards before the men of Rome!
You fled my lead! I saw you creep away in fear when called
upon to fight, I saw you flee from me as if I were a Roman general.
What remains of your martial pride when you can turn your backs
on my recall?" So the Carthaginian vented his bitter spleen.
The Roman squadrons though returned to Nola's city walls,
their shouts exultant as they brought their booty home.

Rome long accustomed to hear but grievous news of her military
defeats, and never refreshed in spirit by any favourable word,
did lift her head and rouse herself at this sign of favour divine,
when at length the first report of this fortunate encounter came.
At once enraged the young men punished all who had shunned
in idleness war's work or sought to hide when thunderous tolled
the drums of war's, while next they charged the men whose lust
for life had found schemes devious to flout the pacts they made
with Carthage and thereby purged the Roman state of treachery[9].
The hapless plan and criminal guilt of Metellus too was punished,
whose advice had been to leave the city behind, abandon Rome![10]
Rome's will was set. Nor did the women fail to match the men

[8] See Bk. 1.133.

[9] See Duff's note *ad loc.*, "The reference is to Roman prisoners taken at Cannae, who were released by Hannibal on condition that they should return if no general exchange of prisoners took place. Some of them returned at once to the camp, pretending they had forgotten something, and then departed again: they claimed in this way to have kept their oath."

[10] See Bk. 10. 420ff.

and rival them in spirit, claiming for themselves an equal share
of commendation. Each matron made haste in eager competition
to carry forth antique heirlooms - jewellery worn once on heads
and hands and necklaces stripped off to feed the needs of war.
Nor did the men feel shame to yield to them then the prize
of well earned praise. They rejoice in allotting lasting praise
for such a sacrifice. The most exalted senatorial class
then followed suit. With stately rivalry their private wealth
was massed for the public good: it pleased them well to strip
their homes and took no pleasure in secreting ought to use
to benefit their private lives, joined also by the nameless mob.
And so the body politic entire of Rome in all its parts combined,
and raised once more her bloodless face to the skies above.

From Apollo's shrine at Delphi messengers brought fresh hope
to sweeten their misery. They said they had heard good news
from the shrine, when the cave resounded thunderous with
the sacred voice and the Sibyl spoke soft, inspired by the god,
"Divest your hearts of heavier fears, race sprung of Venus' line.
You have done with adverse fortune now and all of Mars'
vicissitudes: all that now remains is much less grievous work,
fearful, but not perdition! But render prayer and supplication
to the gods and enrich their altars with warm offerings of blood.
Confront your troubles! Mars will be by your side, and Phoebus
himself, the prophet, will avert your all too present jeopardies,
known always to minimize the dangers of the men of Troy.
Yet prior to the other gods an hecatomb of altars must smoke
to honour Jupiter, one hundred victims fall to the sacred knife.
For he in fury will drive back the cruel clouds and savage storms
of strife to Libya and you will see lord Jupiter brandishing
his aegis, inspiring men to battle in a world torn apart by war."
When news came that these prophecies had been announced
from Parnassus, and Apollo was heard by the commons of Rome,
men climbed in haste the Capitol hill and prostrated themselves
before Jupiter and honoured him with bloody sacrifice of beasts.
They sang a Paean and prayed the oracle might be fulfilled.

Meanwhile Torquatus, well advanced in years, was making shake
Sardinia with his arms from Italy, a campaign rehearsed before[11].
For Hampsagoras, exulting in his Trojan name and heritage,
had invited the Carthaginians to renew hostilities in Sardinia.
He had a handsome son, one Hostus, worthy of a better sire
by far. The father, an enemy of peace and much dependent on
his son's resplendent youth, strove to renew his elder years,
enfeebled by his practice of barbaric ways, by waging war.
When Hostus saw Torquatus' swiftly bringing up his force
upon his right and his eagles advancing eager to join the fray,
he fled through the dark and trackless woods, evading them
through local knowledge, and exploiting familiar short cuts

[11] T. Manlius Torquatus had overrun Sardinia in 235 BCE in his first consulship.

escaped to hide himself in a shaded vale of woodland trees.

Sardinia's isle is girt by deep sounding waves on all sides,
and north and south are compressed into two capes by the sea,
encompassing large tracts of land in the form of a naked foot -
in times past it was named Ichnusa[12] by colonists from Greece.
Next Sardus, confident in his bloodline from the Libyan
Hercules, renamed the land after his own name.
Next Trojans, their city sacked sack and being dispersed
across the sea arrived to settle there perforce a new home.
Then, Iolaüs[13], you brought the land no small renown
when your troop of Thespiadae arrived with naval force.
And the legend also goes that after Actaeon suffered his
sad dismembering fate, when witness to Diana's bath,
his father Aristaeus, appalled at the novel punishment
took flight across the sea to the fastnesses of Sardinia.
Men say his mother Cyrene guide him to this new land.
Sardinia is free of snakes, devoid of any toxic beasts,
but has a lowering sky and is spoiled by many a marsh.
The eastern coast looks to Italy and its spine of rocks
and cliffs abuts the contesting sea. Inland is torrid heat
that bakes the crops beneath the South wind's tropic blast.
The western parts are nourished by Ceres' special gifts.

In this terrain of wooded land and trackless wilderness
did Hostus again and again evade Torquatus – his hope
that Carthaginian troops might come and allies from Spain.
As soon as their fleet arrived to boost his confidence
there was no delay: he burst from cover. The rival hosts
faced off, were all aggression, and were seen to advance
together from afar. They doubled across the plain that lay
between and hurled their speeding spears at long range,
and then at last the sword came into play, of all arms
most trusted. Dire slaughter next as men kill and are killed
and breathe their last breath on the sword's savage point.

I could not even hope to recount the boundless butchery
and savage deeds in a manner worthy of such a tragedy
nor match in words the torrid fervour of the combatants.
And yet, Calliope, grant my efforts this at least that I
may immortalize the deeds, too long unknown, of one
great man, a poet, and bestow on him deserving fame.
From the ancient line of King Messapus was one Ennius[14],
embroiled in the battle's van. His right hand grasped
his vine staff, the Centurion's distinguished mark of rank.
He hailed from harsh Calabria, a son of ancient Rudiae
and now Rudiae's sole famous son and sole claim to fame.

[12] From the Greek word "ichnos" – footprint.
[13] His story is told in Diodorus Siculus, Bk. 6.
[14] Rome's first great poet (269 – 139 BCE) and a centurion in the Second Punic War, author of the epic *Annales* only fragments of which survive.

Then Ennius in the front line of battle won signal fame
(as Orpheus once before laid aside his lyre and hurled
his borrowed Rhodopeian shafts when Cyzicus waged
dire war upon the Argonauts) by killing so many of the foe,
and his ardour grew to match his bloody handiwork.
Now Hostus charged, hoping for fame eternal should he
slay this scourge, and released his spear with all his might.
However, seated on his lofty cloud Apollo mocked his vain
attempt and deflected his weapon wide to the winds,
declaring, "You are far too young and far too arrogant!
Desist from your design! This man is sacrosanct and cared
for by the sisterhood of Muses, a poet worthy of Apollo!
He first will sing of war in illustrious Italian verse
praise Roman leaders to the skies, teach Helicon
to resonate with epic Latin measures[15], nor yet yield
the noble crown of fame to Hesiod." So spoke Apollo, whose
avenging arrow pierced, transfixed the youngster's head.
The young man's fall thrust back his troops in disarray
and they turned tail, presenting their backs all in unison.
Hampsagoras heard of his death and beside himself with rage
gave vent to wild, barbaric cries and fatally pierced his own
breast, pressing hard and breathless on his son's path to death.

Now Hannibal, battered, bruised, defeated in the bitter fight
by Marcellus abandoned the open plain and turned
his arms on the piteous town of Acerrae, no match in war.
He committed the town to the flames and the sword,
then launched himself as fiercely and with equal rage
against Nuceria and levelled its walls to the ground.
The gates and citadel of Casilinum were next and he
fought hard against its ill matched defenders until
he bought his way in and spared the besieged for gold.
He next led his force against the flat lands of Apulia,
directing his fury wherever loot or rage invited him.
Petilia's loyalty lit her funeral pyre and the smoke
of her ruined homes echoed the fate of Saguntum:
Petilia one time proud haven for Hercules' bow[16].

Tarentum too had aligned itself with Hannibal's plans
and his army entered its gates, but a Roman garrison packed
inside the shining citadel trusted its stout battlements.
Then Hannibal put in motion a remarkable plan: his fleet
was at anchor in the port (the tides there surge through
the rocky strait and flood a wide and open anchorage
with water syphoned from the open sea) and under siege
was unable to sail, since the citadel overlooked the bar.
Hannibal cleverly extracted the ships from their blockade
from the sea and transported them across trackless fields.

[15] The Homeric dactylic hexameter.
[16] Philoctetes had founded this city who had been bequeathed the bow and arrows of Hercules in gratitude for helping with the hero's cremation on Mt Oeta.

A slick pathway was laid under wagons made of oak
and sliding on the hides of freshly butchered bulls
the wagon wheels conveyed the fleet across the fields.
The ships were at last conveyed over hills and through bush
to the shore without oars and once again they swam on the sea.

Meanwhile a messenger filled him with a fever of anxiety
as he startled the sea by transporting his fleet in such
a novel way, as he strove to capture the city of Oebalus'
descendants[17] and first ploughed the land with ships
of war. His news that the walls of Capua were besieged,
her barred gates opened, the wretches a prey to total war.
Enraged he forsook his quest: anger and shame lent wings
to traverse the neighbouring countryside at awesome speed,
so he flew and was menacing brought keen to the battle site –
like a tigress, distressed by the loss of a cub, that leaps
forth maddened, crosses the Caucasus in a matter of hours,
bounds flying over the Ganges until at lightning speed
she comes across her offspring's spoor and satisfies
to the full her frenzied rage upon her captured foe.

Centenius foolhardy and careless of danger confronts
him with a force that is all too soon routed and dispersed.
No credit here for Hannibal! For Centenius who once bore
the centurion's staff had suddenly roused the rustic folk,
all vulnerable, sent them to die at the enemy's hands.
Some fourteen thousand men were slain and nor did that
suffice. Fulvius led fourteen thousand more in honest arms,
a man, despite his famous name, not skilled in war.
The victor did not let them hinder his advance, but sped
his march again across the corpses of the prostrate dead.
Performance of one burial delayed him, eager for the fame
and reputation for *humanitas*, though gladdened by the death.
For Gracchus was slain vilely by his host, an impious crime,
when seeking talks and promises from the false Lucanians,
promises betrayed. Surrounded cleverly by secret guile
he fell, while Hannibal snatched praise for the burial.

As soon as it was known that Hannibal was hastening
to Capua, all was instant action: both consuls were there
headlong, as was the total force from Nola, while Fabius
the younger force-marched his men at speed from Arpi.
From different directions Nero and Silenus[18] night and day
impelled, urged on their troops to precipitate war.
They convened from all sides and all the generals took
was encamped on lofty Tifita, the nearby hill above
the walls, and from on high observed the city below.
He saw that surrounded as he was by such a mass
of men he was denied any entry to this allied city

[17] Tarentum had been founded by Oebalus, an ancient king of Sparta.
[18] The praetors Q. Fulvius Flaccus and Appius Claudius Nero.

under siege, and the men of Capua could not break out.
Concerned for the outcome he first thought to smash
the concentrated opposition with the sword, or turn
away from such a plan and seek by guile to distract
this host from the gates and free the town from siege.
And so his inner conversation and his heartfelt thoughts,
"So whither now, my troubled mind? Risk all again,
although the ground is contrary? Shall I turn in flight
with all of Capua as witnesses? Or from this nearby peak
shall I suffer the sack of this allied town before my eyes?
Neither Fabius nor his Master of Horse[19] found me so
discomfited when as victor in Spain I escaped the hills
invested by Roman troops and forced the cattle beasts,
their horns aflame, to scatter through the fields
and let fly abroad their incandescent brands of fire.
My stratagems are not yet all done! The chance to save
this town is lost and so instead - to the siege of Rome!

This plan pleased him and so he made up his mind accordingly:
he did not delay until the Titan had brought forth his fire
breathing steeds from the depths, but with spoken commands
and gesture drew up his men to reveal his daring stratagem,

"Come, men, advance and conquer all, and by your virtues surpass
each and every task, press on at speed past all mere human strength!
Rome is your goal! The conquest of the Alps and Cannae's victory
laid bare the way for you! Come, come to crash your shields
against those Trojan walls and requite the deadly fall of Capua,
which fall was worth the price, if only you see the Palatine
and thunderous Jupiter abandon his Capitoline home!"

Inspired they massed and marched. And Rome was on their lips,
and Rome before their eyes, their belief this enterprise was timed
much better by their leader's cunning strategy than if they
had marched at once from Cannae's fatal field. They swiftly crossed
the Viturna in a fleet of alder boats, while the afterguard destroyed
the abandoned craft with fire to slow the Roman pursuit.
Their destructive squadrons plundered the fields of Sidicinum
and Thracian Cales, the home of Orithyia, named to commemorate
her son[20]. Next they devastated the land of Allifae, a territory not
unloved by Bacchus and also the rural dwelling of the nymphs
of Casinum. The speeding column soon too passed Aquinas,
also Fregellae, which conceals the smoking mausoleum of a long
dead Giant. From there their headlong advance carried them
along the lofty ridges where the warlike men of Frusino cling
to their harsh crags, and where Anagnia, so rich in Ceres' fields
of fertile corn, sits and tops its mountain's swelling crest.
And now at last he enters the plains and cultivated lands
of Labicum, and left in his wake the sore battered walls

[19] Minucius.
[20] See Bk. 8. 514.

of Tusculum, not now siege-worthy at such a critical pass…
Nor did pleasant Algidus delay him nor Juno's home of Gabii.
Headlong next he comes to the river banks where the Anio's
chill current slides smoothly with its sulphurous stream
to join its silent waters with father Tiber's majestic flow.

Ferocious here he first set in place his standards and made
his camp and his cavalry shook the river banks, then Ilia[21],
terrified by the hoof beats fled and hid in the sacred cave of Anio,
while all the nymphs took instant flight from out their spring.

The matrons of Rome wandered here and there bemused the while,
their steps at random as if the city walls themselves were down.
Before their fearful eyes appeared the lacerated shades of those
who met their deaths by the fatal streams of Trebia and Ticinus,
while Paulus, Gracchus and Flaminius, all stained with blood,

together roamed the streets before the wretched women, streets
blocked now with crowds. The Senators though stood erect and grim
and calmed the huge and swelling panic with but a stern expression.
Although tears did erupt from time to time beneath the peak
of some stoic helm, with, "What does Fortune threaten now?
What have the gods is store?" The young men were dispersed
among the lofty towers, while this thought assailed them all,
"Our Rome believes it sufficient now simply to guard her walls!"

Then Hannibal allowed his travel weary troops but a brief
night's sleep, while sleepless himself, a man uninclined to rest,
believing time asleep was but the theft of time which should
be utilized in action and so he donned his shining panoply
and ordered his Numidian cavalry then to ride at point.
Hand light on the reins, he canters round the city walls
of Rome, inspiring dread with the sounding beat of his hooves.
He now inspects the approaches and beats with hostile spear
upon the shuttered gates, enjoys the panic of the timid citizens.
Or at leisure standing on some lofty hills he enters Rome by sight
and learns the topography of the place and its local history.
He would have observed all, delved into each and every place
with searching vision, had not Fulvius arrived in a flurry of haste,
though without having abandoned entirely the siege of Capua.
So then at last Hannibal turned his triumphant horsemen back
to camp, well satisfied at heart with his observations of Rome.
When night was driven from the sky and Neptune blushed pink
with Aurora's first flush, as she summoned men to the working day,
he despatched his troops, bounding from the ruptured barricade[22],
and in full voice proclaimed, "By all your very many glorious deeds,
my friends, and by your good right hands now sanctified with blood,

[21] See Duff's note ad loc. "Ilia, also called Rhea Silvia, was the daughter of King Amulius. When she bore Romulus and Remus to Mars, she was condemned to be drowned in the Anio: there she changed her earthly life for that of a goddess and wife of the river-god."
[22] The rampart of Hannibal' camp on the Anio.

I pray, go forth to match your former selves and be as bold in arms
as Rome is full of dread! Remove this one remaining obstacle
and nought remains in the whole wide world for you to conquer.
And neither shall their people's heritage from Mars hold you
in check. You will take a city not unaccustomed to be taken,
once captured by a thousand Gauls[23]. The Senators sit
perhaps upon their lofty curule chairs, like their ancestors
before, in anticipation of, in preparation for a noble death."

So Hannibal spoke, but the men of Rome had no need
themselves of a leader's rhetoric or impassioned pleas.
Enough the sight of mothers and children to urge them on,
the tearful faces of beloved parents stretching out their hands.
The wives lift children to be seen and the babies' cries inspire
their husbands' hearts. They kiss the hands that grasp the sword.
The men are keen to front the foe close ranked before the walls,
look back at their loved ones and choke down their tears.
Indeed, as the city gates turned on their hinges to open wide
and as soon as the army advanced therefrom in full array,
a threnody poured forth of pain and prayer across the walls
to reach the skies and random Roman matrons scattered, bared
their breasts, let loose their hair and gave shrill tongue to grief.
The force was led out by Fulvius, "Who does not know," he said,
"that Hannibal marched against our household gods perforce?
He fled the gates of Capua!" He tried to weave more words,
but a sombre clap of thunder struck and interrupted him,
while a sudden tempestuous storm descended from the clouds.

Returning from the land of the Ethiopians Jupiter saw the threat
of Hannibal's advance upon the fortified walls of Romulus' town,
and rousing the gods at once he bad them defend the city of Rome
and to make best haste to take their stations on the seven hills.
He himself from his high vantage point upon the Tarpeian Rock
in concert roused his total armament, storm clouds and gales,
a frenzy of hail and thunder-flash and darkling shrouds of rain.
The heavens clashed and trembled and the sky was enclosed
in gloomy dark, while night concealed the land in her black robe.
The storm assailed the eyes and though close at hand Rome lay hid
from her foe. Fire plunged through cloud against the Carthaginians
with a constant crackle and strident flames licked at their limbs.
Next all the winds, South, North and dusky winged African
Sou'wester waged war in heaven sufficient to gratify the heart
and mind of angry Jupiter. A regiment of cataclysmic waters fell,
pitch dark its twisting blast, pitch black its hurricane force,
and embraced the surrounding plains, a turbulent flow and flood
of foam and waves. The ruler of the gods raised his right hand
and from his lofty mountain top smashed his thunderbolt
on Hannibal's shield, a man obdurate, determined not to yield
an inch, but his spear's sharp head of iron melted in the heat,

[23] Hannibal refers to the fact that Rome had been taken by the Gauls in 390 B.C.

and as if ruined in a furnace blast his sword was liquefied.

Although his arms were quite destroyed yet Hannibal tried
to rally his troops, taught them the heavenly fire was blind,
the sound of the battling winds so much vain and empty din.
Then after his men's disaster and the heavens had fallen in ruins,
without so much as an enemy sword been seen in the gloom,
he ordered his standards to camp and rehearsed his dark rage,
"You owe the winds and stormy winter weather, Rome, for one
day's saving grace! And yet tomorrow's dawning light shall not
defraud me my prize, though Jupiter himself may descend
to earth!" He gnashed his teeth in rage as he said these things,
and, See! – from a sky now calm there shone a sunbeam clear,
the heavens shone flawlessly bright and the clouds dispersed.
Aeneas' descendants recognized the deity and putting down
their arms, stretched suppliant hands to the Capitol's heights
and wreathed its holiest inner place with sacred laurel leaves.
And then they gazed upon the joyful face of Jove, so recently
soaked, bathed in perspiration, "Father supreme of deities,"
they prayed, "grant that Hannibal may fall in battle, slain
by your bolt divine: he cannot succumb to a mortal's hand!"

And thus they prayed and then silence kept, when Hesperus
had hidden the earth in the dark concealing shroud of night.
As soon as the sun's uplifted blazing lantern eclipsed the star
of Hesperus and summoned men once more to the working day,
then Hannibal was back, nor did the young men of Rome remain
in camp. Their swords had not yet been drawn, nor the hosts
kept separate by so much space as would encompass the flight
of a javelin's cast when of a sudden the brilliance of the sky
began to grow dim and impenetrable clouds descended then,
the daylight fled, while Jupiter prepared to arm once more
for battle. Storm winds howled while a whirlwind mass of cloud
from the south unearthly glowed. Jove thundered himself
and Rhodope shook and Taurus, Pindus and Atlas' very base.
The lakes of Erebus[24] heard, and Typhoeus[25] himself, immersed
in the stygian depths below recognized the din of war celestial.
The South wind attacked, driving a thick and pitch black cloud
of hail in advance, compelling Hannibal to retreat to his camp,
however much he railed and delayed, his threats in vain.

But when he had laid down his arms, secure behind his walls,
the cheerful face of heaven appeared once more and at peace,
and none would have believed so calm a sky had played host
to Jupiter in full tongue, had been torn apart by thunderclap.
The Carthaginian was obdurate and vowed that heaven's wrath
no more would fall on them, if only their native spirit could fire
their hands again and they did not think it impious for the men

[24] The Underworld.
[25] See Duff's note, "The Giant imprisoned under Inarime (Ischia)." This was a volcanic district on the Campanian coast.

of Carthage to plunder Rome. For where lay hid the thunderbolts
of Jupiter when Carthaginian swords had littered Cannae's field
with Roman dead? When Trasimene's still waters swam foul
with Roman blood? "If the ruler of the gods above," he said,
"defends the walls of Rome and hurls down bolt on bolt,
why hesitate amidst such mayhem to strike me down as I
bear arms against him? Are we to present our backs in flight
to winter winds? I beg you, let that intensity of vigour and will
return, which empowered you gladly to renew hostilities,
despite our leaders' treaties, covenants!" He roused them so,
until the Titan sun released his team's foam spattered reins.
And night did not assuage his cares nor did sleep dare approach
the warrior, rather his madness returned with the dawn of day.
He called his fearful men again to arms and battered his shield –
a tremendous din to mimic with his arms mere murmurings of Jove.

When Hannibal heard that the senators of Rome had such faith
in their gods that auxiliary troops had been sent to the shores
of Spain and that force had made its way from the walls at night,
that under siege the citizens felt free of care, as if Rome itself
was safe, in a frenzy of more violent rage he pressed his attack.
And Hannibal now came close to the city walls, when Jove
addressed the heartsick Juno, admonishing her with words
intended to soothe her care: "Will you never curb, restrain
the insatiable rage of this youth, dear sister and wife of mine?
This was the Carthaginian warrior who laid Saguntum waste
and levelled the Alps, enchained the Eridanus' sacred stream,
polluted Trasimene: and will that man his preparations make
to force his entry to our very homes and the citadel of Rome?
Restrain the man! For as you see, he is demanding flames
and prepares with bonfires lit to imitate the thunderbolt."

She thanked him for his words and descending on the breeze
the child of Saturn seized the Carthaginian's strong right hand,
"Where, where the headlong rush, madman? Do you intend
a greater war than mortal man can wage?" So Juno spoke,
removed her concealing veil of cloud, revealing her reality.
"Your business is not now with Trojan or with Latin colonies.
For, momentarily, the mist departed from your eyes, I will
allow you clarity of sight. So see, how where the peak
of the Palatine, so named for Evander's home[26], lifts itself
on high to greet the winds, Apollo's bastion is there, bow strung
and rattling quiver full, as he anticipates the impending war.
And look where the neighbouring slopes of the massy Aventine
rise high! Do you see how Diana, Latona's virgin daughter, wields
brands kindled in the incandescent streams of hellish Phlegethon,
her arms bared, eagerly outstretched for the battle still to come?
Observe, elsewhere, how Mars in all his savage panoply of war
has filled the Campus Martius, the field named for himself.

[26] Pallantium in Arcadia.

Here Janus comes prepared for war and there in turn Quirinus,
each god from his own hill[27]. And finally behold how Jupiter,
the mighty brandishes the aegis, spewing storm and thunderbolt
and with what conflagrations huge, enraged, he feeds his ire!
Now hither turn your gaze and dare behold the Thunderer!
What storms, what thunderbolts and lightning are conjured
by the shake and nod of his head! What fire flares from his eyes!
Yield to the gods and, unlike the Titans, desist from unwinnable wars!"
Such her words which turned about this warrior, untutored
in peace and moderation, but awed by the countenance divine:
and so she restored peace both to heaven and earth alike.

So Hannibal left and ordered his standards uprooted and moved
and as he looked back the general swore he would return.
At once the light of the sun shone brighter in the firmament
and the shimmering heavens revelled in Phoebus' radiance.
And yet even when the sons of Aeneas beheld from the walls
the standards uprooted and the general turn tail, silent looks
were exchanged and gestures confirmed the thing they dare
not believe, so pervasive the fear that adhered. They thought
their enemy had no wish to retreat – here was trickery, a trap
and Carthaginian guile. And silent mothers kissed their babes.
At length the Carthaginian force marched off quite out of sight,
removing their fears and suspicions of trickery and guile.
And then indeed they everywhere flocked to the sacred Capitol,
embraced each other and with one united voice proclaimed
the victory of Tarpeian Jupiter and garlanded his shrine.
They opened all the gates of Rome and ecstatic with bliss
made frantic haste to seek the hoped for joy so long denied.
Some gaze upon the spot where Hannibal had pitched
his royal tent, others at the lofty throne from where he had
addressed his gathered host, where the warlike Spaniards,
fierce Garamantians and savage Ammonites had made camp.
They bathe their naked bodies in the living waters of the stream;
set altars raised in place to the river Nymphs of Anio.
At last, the walls now purified, they return to festal Rome.

[27] Janus from the Janiculum, Quirinus from the Quirinal.

Punica: Book 13

Silius Italicus

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Punica XIII

Having withdrawn to the river Tutia, Hannibal is prevented from attacking Rome again by a deserter Dasius who declares that the city cannot be taken so long as it contains the Palladium, an ancient statue of Minerva. Hannibal returns to Bruttian territory (1-93). *The Romans take Capua* (94-380). *The father and uncle of Scipio meet their deaths in Spain* (381-384). *On receiving news of this Scipio descends to Hades to see their spirits* (385-396). *After seeing many famous ghosts of both men and women the Sibyl reveals to him the future death of Hannibal.* (397-893). *Scipio returns from Hades* (894f.).

When Hannibal had made his grudging exit and the Tarpeian heights
had scarce disappeared from sight, the Carthaginian general turned
his face once more to the city of Rome and prepared to return.
He camped beside the Tutia whose slender stream knew no fame,
but flowed through meadows unmarred by steepling banks to join
its silent waters noiselessly with the Tiber's Etruscan flow.
And now he railed at the leaders of his host, the dictates of the gods
and at his very self, "Tell me, men who swelled the lake of Trasimene
with gore, whose thunderous arms the land of Daunus seismic shook,
to what foreign shores do you cowards carry off your standards now,
all spiritless? For what sword-point, what javelin's head has pierced
your breast? If mother Carthage stood now present before your eyes,
her high proud towered head aloft, what reasons or excuses could
you give for your retreat when you have no wounds to demonstrate?
'I fled a rainstorm, dear mother Carthage, and thunder clouds mixed
with hail!' Expel this womanish complaint, my Tyrian men, and drive
it out, unless you know not how to conduct the business of Mars
other than beneath a clear blue sky, the sun shining bright on high!"

The dread of the gods was yet in their hearts and the thunder stench
upon their arms and still they saw the raging and embattled Jupiter.
And yet the habit of obedience was strong in them, the need to do
whatever they were told and little by little the desire to return
the standards to Rome spread out among all the rank and file.
Just so, when a pebble thrown breaks through a pond's calm
surface, it generates in the beginning small expanding circles,
that next with increasing impetus make shimmer the pool entire,
and multiply the crowded and concentric rings around the pond,
until at last a final circle, its perimeter ever expanding, contacts
with spreading impetus the surrounding banks on every side.

In opposition, though, spoke a man of no ignoble name, one Dasius,
at once Apulia's shame and source of pride, who traced his lineage
from Diomedes's stock, the son of Oeneus, king of Aetolia's realm.
Well blessed with wealth he was, but not worthy of trust, had made
himself fierce Hannibal's friend, not trusting Latium's imperium –
And he, bearing in mind his ancestors' long lived traditional views,
spoke so, "When ten long years of war had shaken the walls of Troy
and Mars was halted before the battlements, his bloody thirst as yet
unslaked, Chalchas – for so the greatest of heroes Diomedes used

often to tell this tale amidst the drinking cups, a tale enshrined
within his memory, to father Daunus, his spouse's inquisitive sire -
yes, Calchas assured the anxious Greeks that unless they contrived
to steal the warrior goddess Athene's statue from its temple
on the citadel, then Ilium would never yield to Spartan arms,
nor would ever Leda's child, the lady Helen return to Amyclae.
In fact it was the gods' firm decree that no one could ever take
by force a city that this image had chosen as its residence.
According then to Calchas' wish Diomedes, my forebear went
with Ulysses of Ithaca and invaded the citadel, slew the guards
at the temple's very gate and carried of the sacred Palladium,
and sadly exposed Troy to its evil fate at the hands of us Greeks.
And when Diomedes founded a city within the bounds of Italy,
uneasy at his sacrilege he made to placate both the Trojan deity
through ritual and appease as well the household gods of Ilium.
A massive temple was already rising on his city's lofty citadel,
but the site did not please the deity from Laomedon's Troy.
Minerva, virgin goddess of Lake Tritonis, revealed herself
in Diomedes' dreams in the depths of night to threaten him,
"These works of yours, Diomedes, are not sufficient to gratify
my wish for worthy praise. For Garganus and the Daunian land
do not meet my needs: seek rather in the lands of Latium a man
who is already marking out the walls of a more magnificent Troy.
So thither take my sacred ribbons and my chaste ancestral self."
Made fearful by these warnings Diomedes duly went to Latium.
The Phrygian conqueror[1] was already founding a second Troy
in Lavinium and hanging Trojan armour there in a sacred grove,
but when the son of Tydeus, Diomedes, reached the Tiber's banks
he set up there upon the river's side his awesome glittering camp.
The sons of Priam shook with fear, but Daunus' son-in-law
held out in his right hand a glaucous olive branch as a sign
of peace and spoke amidst the Trojans' grumbled murmurings,
"Anchises' son, pray put aside all memories of anger and dread!
The blood we sweated out beside the Xanthus and the Simois,
the rivers of Ida, and beside the western Scaean gate of Troy,
was not of our doing, but of the gods and savage sister Fates.
So come! Why not spend the rest of our allotted time beneath
more fortunate auspices? And let us join weapon-less hands.
Minerva here will witness our pact." He sued for pardon from
the nervous Trojans and on his stern revealed Minerva's form.
This goddess dealt death to the Gauls who had dared to break
through Rome's city walls, did not return a single warrior
from that host of many thousands to his homeland shrines."

Unmanned by these words Hannibal bad his troops uproot
the standards - they happy at last to depart. They marched
into the country where in a holy grove Feronia's richest shrine,
is revered and sacred Capenas' stream waters Flavinia's land.
The story was that the temple's wealth had remained untouched

[1] Aeneas, Vergil's hero of the *Aeneid* which vastly influenced the *Punica.*

and grown from benefactions from far and wide since its
foundation long ago, with massive gold reserves stored there
for many centuries, kept safe by superstition and religious awe,
but Hannibal polluted barbarian hearts and minds with a lust
for plunder, arming them with an unholy contempt for the gods.
They were pleased then to march far away where the Bruttians
plough lands running down towards the Sicilian sea.

And so the gloomy Carthaginian made his way to the shore
near Rhegium, while Fulvius, victorious in driving the foe
from his native Rome, carried bad news to the walls of Capua,
its citizens besieged, and filled to the brim their cup of woe.
Then clasping the hands of each of his most famous warriors,
"Repudiate this shame by main force! For why does Capua
still safely stand, a second Carthage to our own when she broke
her treaty with Rome and even sought by law one consulship
of two and then sent Hannibal to the gates of Rome? Why wait
for Hannibal and his Africans at ease behind her lofty walls?"
He then matched deeds to words and drove his men to raise
tall towers of oak with which to overtop the lofty city walls,
and now he urged them on to clamp together wooden beams
with iron ties to ram and batter down the high gate posts
and shake and shatter the barricades that slowed his assault.
Here rose an offensive earthen wood buttressed rampart,
here weighty mantlets[2] were built with armoured coverings.
And when all the fruits of his experience had been deployed,
he quickly gave the signal for his men to scale the city walls
with ladders and so filled the citizens with savage dread,
when suddenly his work was blessed by an auspicious sign.

There was a hind[3], of a colour rarely seen upon the land,
eclipsing snow in brightness and the swansdown's white.
When Capys[4] was marking out the city walls with his plough,
his heart was melted by the grateful affection of the tiny fawn,
this sylvan gift which he had reared and had imbued with close
to human consciousness. It shed its feral state and docile came
at his behest to his table, delighting in its master's gentle touch.
The noble women used to groom its coat with a golden comb
and renew its pristine hue with the river's cleansing stream.
The hind became the city's guardian deity and the citizens
believed it was Diana's acolyte and offered it incense divine.
It happily held onto a long and active life, extending a green
old age to match in extent the roll call of centuries survived
by Rome, eternal city, but her dark ending came at the last.
For shocked by a sudden invasion of ravenous wolves
that entered the gloom of the city by night – a portent sure

[2] "A mantlet was a large shield or portable shelter used for stopping projectiles in medieval warfare." *Wikipedia*.
[3] See Duff *ad loc.* "Much of the detail about this animal is taken from Virgil (*Aen.* vii. 483foll.); but the hind of Capua differs in sex, colour and longevity."
[4] The founder of Capua.

of evil luck in times of war – the hind at the dawn's first hint
of light betook herself outside the city gates and in a state
of panic and confusion the trembling fugitive fled to seek
the meadows that lay beyond and beneath the city walls.
She was caught by a band of cheerful hunters and Fulvius,
sacrificed her to you, Diana, child of Leto, a most gratifying
gift, praying that you be a present help to his endeavours.

Then trusting in the deity the general moved up his troops,
encircling the besieged, and where the walls began to curve
and bend inwards he enclosed them with a close packed host
and as if in a hunt he penned the enemy in with his spears.
And while they trembled in fear, Taurea the warrior burst
from the gate, his helmet plume on high as he strove to control
the heated spirit of his foaming stead, a man to whom Hannibal himself
gave primacy with the spear, as well as Autololes and the Moorish pikes!
He savagely checked his horse as it refused to stay calm at the sound
of the trumpets' blare and when he saw he had come in close range
of his enemy's force, he shouted out his challenge to their face,
"Let Claudius present himself here on the plain" – this Claudius was
pre-eminent in war and had won much fame in a thousand fights -
"himself alone, should he have sufficient faith in his right hand
to come forth and meet with me in single combat to the death[5]!"

Then Claudius, as soon as Taurea's voice had struck his ears
and his commander's leave for combat had been granted him -
for it was forbidden and a capital charge for warriors to fight
unauthorized - so when the general gave him leave, he burst
ecstatic from the ranks across the open plain and raised
a billowing cloud, a veritable storm of accumulated dust.
Taurea disdained the help of throwing strap or knotted cord
to help to boost his javelin in flight, but he summoned all
his natural strength as he brandished aloft his spear, and in
a frenzy now himself, he whirled his weapon into the skies.
The Roman's plan was other quite; he concentrated hard
and studied his opponent's armour to find the surest point
of access for his steel to wound. He brandished his shaft,
now grasping it tight and feinting a thrust; he transfixed
his enemy's shield through the central boss, but the spear's
sharp point was cheated of the joyous taste of blood it craved.
Then Claudius quickly unsheathed his sword, while Taurea fled
his imminent doom: his iron heels spurred on his flying horse.
The more nimble Roman pressed hard upon the fugitive,
and his reins fell free as he urged his headlong pursuit.
As terror drove the vanquished inside the gates, so rage,
a thirst for glory and well earned blood impelled the victor.
The citizens could scare believe their eyes or trust their faculties
at the sight of an enemy bursting unaccompanied into the town,
and fearless urging his horse through the fearful city's midst

[5] See, Livy, Bk. 13.46.12 who describes this duel between Claudius Asellus of Rome and Cerrinus Vibellius Taurea of Capua.

until he left through the opposite gate to greet his friends.

And so all Roman hearts blazed with equal zeal to rush
the city walls and plunge headlong into Capua's core.
Both weapons and torches blazed together. A storm
of rocks descended and spears assailed the highest walls.
No single man could excel in daring or in bravery;
rage fired each right hand alike, while Cretan arrows swam
the breeze to glide in flight and fall within the city's midst.
And Fulvius was glad there was no more need for exhortation
or encouragement: each soldier seized his own appointed task.
When he saw his men inspired and that each was in control
of his own deeds, he charged full tilt against the gate himself,
and chose through daring risk to gain outstanding fame.

Three brothers of equal age were guarding the shuttered gate
for each of whom a chosen band of a hundred men kept watch,
maintaining together with them their appointed place.
Of these men one Numitor in beauty excelled, then Laurens
in fleetness of foot and Taburunus in stature, length of limb.
And each man's arms were different: a wonderful archer one,
another brandished the spear and waged his war with thrust
of envenomed point, not placing trust in the untainted steel,
the third equipped fire-brands with incandescent pitch.
Such was storied Geryon, three-bodied monster of Atlas' shore,
a dreadful beast, whose threefold hands each bore
their weapon of choice in combat; the first hurled flames,
ferocious, the next in turn shot arrows, while the third
hand brandished a sharp spear of horn; so Geryon could
with one single assault inflict three separate injuries.
When the consul espied these three so variously armed
and saw the carnage about the threshold, and the gate
posts stained with his own attacking warriors' blood,
he hurled his rotating spear with all the strength of rage.
It clove the air and carried death, this shaft of Italian yew,
and where Numitor had exposed his flank, bending his bow
to pour down arrows, it pierced and transfixed his gut.
However, Virrius[6] not content to fight his fight constrained
inside the walls, a man impetuous, but a trivial warrior,
exploded through the city gates in a fever of rash lunacy,
left them open to the plain and exposed his wretched men
to the victor's wrath. For Scipio rushed to face their attack,
mowed down their ranks with insatiable rage.

Harsh Calenus was born on the shady slopes of Tifata
and bred to be bold; nor was his heart of lesser stamp
than his mighty frame. He would often steal up on a lion,
or quite bare-headed go to battle, wrestle with a steer,
drag an angry bull to the ground by its slanting horns,

[6] See Bk. 11.65ff.

accustomed to boost his reputation by reckless deeds.
When rash Virrius burst headlong from the city's gate,
Calenus followed, no breastplate worn – he scorned
its use or any delay - and so nimbly pressured as victor
his scattered foe, breathless in their armour's weight.
Already he had transfixed Veliturnus through the gut,
and struck Marius down with a rock ripped from the earth,
who used to joust on horseback with Scipio, his equal
in age. With his final breath the wretch begged his friend
for help as the stone crashed into his gaping mouth.
A savage grief redoubled both Scipio's strength
and his tears as he poured them forth, as he gave
sweet solace to his friend's death throes, and he saw
his enemy fall when Scipio hurled his sibilant spear.
Like a bird that cleaves the fluid breezes, that spear
impaled Calenus' heart and collapsed his mighty limbs:
just so the impetus across the sea of a nimble Liburnian
craft, driven on by oars pulled back in time to the crew's
chests, ploughing the waves she out runs the very winds -
with but one stroke her way excels her own boat's length.

Volesus then abandoned his shield to speed his quest
for the walls and pursued Ascanius on foot as he flew across
the plain, in vain - he was decapitated by Volesus' sword
and his head fell down before its owner's feet; the corpse,
beheaded stumbled on, its speed and impetus were such.
The citizens under siege had no hope left to defend the walls
now breached and so they retreated and – ineffable act! -
excluded their companions, as they clamoured for entry.
The hinges turned and the bolts shot home, a tardy defence!
The Romans attacked the beleaguered city more fiercely then,
and had not blind night enclosed the earth in its embrace,
the broken gates would have welcomed in an eager enemy.

Night's darkness though did not allow both sides an equal rest.
The Romans knew untroubled sleep as comes with victory.
However, the Capuans shocked either by the sad complaints
of tearful, wailing wives or the groans of fearful senators,
prayed for an end to torment, a limit to their dreadful toils,
but Virrius, an architect of perfidy and yet a leading man
in the senate was in a quandary, denied any chance of help
from Hannibal, harangued the senators to put aside all care
of life, "I had hoped to set our sceptre over Italy, and swore
that if the gods had favoured Hannibal and Fortune been
our friend, Quirinus' Trojan realm would repair to Capua.
I sent men to shake the walls of Rome and its Tarpeian heights;
nor did I lack the vigour to demand that of the consuls one
should bear our name and equally share the fasces' load.
My life till now is long enough. While the night is young,
if there is any man whose heart's eternal friend is freedom,
let that man seek my table and my feast this very night.

And then Bacchus' wine will overwhelm him, body and soul,
and soothe the sting of death, and he will drink the remedy
for defeat and disarm adverse fate with poison's benison."
And so he spoke and sought his home and many followed him.
A mighty pyre of oak was raised in the midst of the house,
to welcome them all upon their shared and impending death.

Anguish and fear still maddened the common populace.
And now Decius came too tardily to mind and his nobility,
chastised with cruel exile. Loyalty looked down from high,
the goddess, and made anxious their treacherous hearts.
A secretive voice was heard, diffused upon the breeze,
"Do not with savage steel, mere mortals, rupture treaties
made, rather keep the Faith unsullied. For she outshines
the royal purple! He who delights in breaking his troth
in risky times and betrays the slender hopes of a friend,
nor his house, nor his wife, nor his life will ever remain
untouched by grief and tears. Good Faith which he fouled
and despised will harry him as victim both day and night,
by land and sea." And now a wicked Fury attended each
and every meeting and every meal, and feasting she took
her ease upon the couch, quite hidden and shrouded in cloud.
Herself she proffers goblets that foam with Stygian venom
and generously serves both punishment and death.
Meanwhile Virrius granted time for the toxin to penetrate
his inmost parts and ascended the pyre, embraced the men
who shared his fate and ordered the flame be thrust beneath.

The shades of night had run their course and the victors
advanced apace. And now the Campanians saw Milo bestride
the city wall and call upon his companions to follow suit.
Thunderstruck the citizens threw wide the gates and made
their hesitant way to the enemy's camp, as many as had as cowards
escaped death's dues. The city lay exposed, admitted its madness
and opened up its homes, made foul by Carthaginian guests.
The wives and children hurried forth and the sad body corporate
of senators – and the mob for whose grim fate not one man grieved.
The whole Roman army stood and leant upon its spears and gazed
upon these men, uncomfortable beneath the burdens of either joy
or grief, whose grizzled beards now covered their breasts and swept
the ground to foul their whiskers with dust, as they gave tongue
with embarrassing tears to piteous and shameful pleas for safety,
and filled the tenuous breeze with the sounds of effeminate grief.

And while the Roman soldiers wondered at such an effete display
and ferocious waited for the command to level the city's walls,
a sudden and silent sense of religious foreboding ran through
their hearts and soothed their savage souls with numinous awe,
to stop them hurling their flaming brands and torches to reduce
the temples there to a single heap of ash. A gentle deity infused
insensibly their inmost senses and unseen by any one of them

he made their hearts aware of Capua's proud heritage,
of its antiquity; he told them to change their minds and realize
how sensible it was for men to house and occupy that vast
and spreading plain. And gradually the fury of their hearts
was calmed, their violence was mollified and assuaged.

For Pan was sent by Jupiter who wished the Trojan town[7]
kept safe – tiptoeing deity Pan who with his cloven hoof
leaves scarce a mark to trace his footprints on the earth,
Arcadian god who deals sportive blows of Tegean goat
skin, prancing through the crowded streets on festal days[8].
Sharp needles of pine bind his hair and shade his temples,
while tiny caprine horns erupt from his rubicund brows;
his ears prick up and an unruly beard hangs from his chin.
He carries a shepherd's crook and a comforting soft doe
skin coverlet gives very welcome warmth to his left side.
There is no crag so steep or inhospitable but that he can
like some winged creature balance his body's weight
and plant his cloven hooves upon the trackless steeps.
Sometimes he turns his head around to laugh out loud
at the joke of the hairy tail that sprouts from his behind.
And he extends his hand, protecting his brow from the sun's
harsh glare as he surveys his pastoral domain with shaded eye.
So after he had fulfilled the instructions of Jupiter and calmed
the deadly passions and soothed the soldiers' angry hearts,
Pan flew back and returned to the well loved vales of Arcadia
and Maenalus, and from that sacred mountain's peak he played
sweet songs on his melodious pipes to recall the far flung flocks.

The Roman soldiers, on their general's orders not to fire the gates
and allow the walls to stand – an esteemed sign of clemency – sheathed
their swords and doused their blazing and incendiary brands of fire.
Much booty was carried out from the temples of the gods and from
the gilded homes and all the stuff that had sustained a life of luxury
and for the cost of which goods men died, female clothes stripped
from the bodies of men and citrus tables sourced from foreign lands,
goblets embossed with Eastern gems to provoke a taste for luxury.
There was an endless array of silver plate, a mass of golden ware,
engraved and dedicated to feasting, rank on rank of captured slaves,
sufficient silver talents plundered from Capua's stately homes
to sustain the demanding appetite of any long and lasting war,
handmaidens in droves to serve at the never ending festivities.

When Fulvius at last put and end to the pillaging of the homes,

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[7] Capua was founded by Capys one of the companions of Aeneas in the flight from Troy.
[8] See Duff, *ad loc.* "The reference is to the Lupercalia, a feast in honour of Pan celebrated every year on February 15, when the priests, called Luperci, ran about the city, striking persons whom they met with strips of goat skin." Also, *Wikipedia*, "**Lupercalia** was an ancient, possibly pre-Roman pastoral annual festival, observed in the city of Rome from the 13th to the 15th of February to avert evil spirits and purify the city, releasing health and fertility. Lupercalia was also called *dies Februatus*, after the instruments of purification called *februa*, which gave February *(Februarius)* its name."

a trumpet sounding the recall, he spoke from his lofty platform,
a man not averse to rewarding daring deeds successfully done,
"Native of Lanuvium," he said, "whom Juno the Preserver sent
to us, Milo, accept as conqueror the decoration of Mars himself,
and bind around your brows the turrets of the mural coronet[9]."
He called out then the noblemen whose guilt condemned them
as first offerings, and punished them with the executioner's axe.

And then a stroke of savage bravery – I cannot happily conceal
a deed of spectacular worth, even of an enemy – for with a cry
of rage Taurea declared, " Will you deprive with steel the life
of a man greater than you? Will your lictor on command allow
a head cut from a noble neck fall before these cowards' feet?
The gods will never grant the Romans this!" And then with one
last baleful glare at his judge and one final flash of defiance,
he suddenly plunged his warlike sword between his ribs.
To which, the general, " Join your falling native land in death!
Let Mars be judge of our respective worth, and which of us
is handiest in battle. As for you that thinks just punishment
a source of shame, you could have chosen to fall in the fray."

While Capua paid for her unfortunate crime with no little loss
of blood, at that same time in Spain Fortuna, cruel deity,
combining joy with sorrow, had snatched away two Scipios,
By chance young Scipio was taking then his ease in Puteoli,
returning home and to its gods now the fighting was done.
The news brought bitter tears for the loss, the bitter loss
of his kin. Although not one to succumb to fortune's blows,
he rent apart his clothes and violently beat his breast.
His friends had not the strength to check him, nor even had
the sense of his high office and command: his love for family
erupted in rage against vile gods, despising consolation's balm.
Day followed day on day consumed with grief insatiable.
Images of his elder kinsmen danced before his face and eyes.
And so he prepared to summon the ghostly spirits of his dead
and soothe his desperation and grief by conversing with them[10].
The near by swamp where the stagnant waters of Acheron
signposted the foetid entrance to Avernus encouraged him.
Young Scipio was minded too to learn at once what lay ahead.

The young man made his way to Cumae where in Apollo's name
Autonoë, the Sibyl, ruled, had charge of the sacred tripods
and the cave and he revealed the plans of his sick heart to her
and asked that he might encounter his kinsmen face to face.
The Sibyl did not long hesitate, "The traditional custom is,"
she said, "to sacrifice before dawn a black fleeced sheep
for the dead in their graves, and then to bury in an open trench

[9] See Duff *ad loc.* "This was decorated with the turrets of a battlement and was given to the soldier who was first to scale the walls of a besieged city".
[10] What follows is inspired by Vergil's description of Aeneas' journey to the underworld in *Aeneid* 6.

the blood that flows from its still breathing opened throat.
The realm of the pallid dead will then send its denizens to you.
As for the rest of your demands a greater one than I will sing.
I will elicit for you prophecies from the meadows of Elysium
and grant you an audience as you make sacrifice with the shade
of that elder Sibyl who speaks the secrets of Apollo's heart.
Come, go! When humid night has turned herself past half
her course, then purify yourself and lead your chosen beasts
to Avernus' gorge hard by and soften Pluto's obdurate heart.
As well take with you gifts of honey and unadulterated wine!"

Inspired by this advice and the name of the elder Sibyl engaged
to help he secretly prepared the sacrificial victims prescribed.
Next, when night in her progress had reached the hour proposed
and the hours of darkness past matched those as yet to come,
he rose from his bed and made his way to the perilous gates
that gave access to gloomy Tartarus, and waiting deep within
that Stygian cave there sat the priestess, true to her sworn word.
Then where first the ruptured earth unseals the fissure loathed
by heaven, whose cavernous mouth belches forth the sharp
and miasmic bitter breath of Cocytus' marsh and streams,
the Sibyl led young Scipio forward and urged him quickly to dig
a trench with his sword and chanting there breathless arcana
she bad him slaughter each beast in turn. And first a black bull
was slain for the unseen King[11], next fell for divine Proserpina
of Henna a virgin heifer, as yet not put to the mating beast.
And at the last for you, Alecto, and also you, forever stern
Megaera, two choice and woolly two-tooth ewes were slain.
They then poured honey over all and sacred gifts of wine and milk.
"Endure, young man," exclaimed the Sibyl, " and brave the sight
of all that will arise from Erebus! I see the whole of Tartarus
approaching - the Third Kingdom[12] stands before our very eyes!
Behold! For manifold shapes make haste, and all of humankind
that have come to be and died since the primal Gap[13]. And now
you will see all, the Cyclopes and Scylla and the Thracian horse
that fed on human flesh. Endure to witness all and fearless
withdraw your sword from its sheath and grasp it firmly now.
If any of these spirits press forward to drink of this blood before
the virgin Sibyl's ghost appears, then hack and dismember them.
Meanwhile observe how this unburied shade[14] advances
in haste and speeds his way to join in speech with you.
It is his privilege before the funeral flames cremate his corpse
or taste his life's blood to speak in his accustomed tones."
So Scipio looked at him and was shocked by the sudden sight,
" What chance," he said, "has robbed your weary native land

[11] Pluto, Lord of the Underworld.
[12] See Duff *ad loc*. "The sky and earth form the First Kingdom, the sea is the Second, and Hades the Third." These are respectively the domains of Jupiter, Neptune and Pluto.
[13] It is assumed in the translation that Silius is referring to the creation myth recorded by Hesiod's *Theogony*. Hence the translation "Gap" for *Chaos*.
[14] The ghost is that of Appius Claudius who died in the siege of Capua.

of your aid, when horrid wars demand the skills of such as you?
For Appius will never yield to any man in either feats of arms
or strategy. Ten days have dawned in their turn since I myself
saw you on my return from Capua under treatment for your wounds,
with only one regret that those wounds did not let you storm
the city walls of Capua and victorious enjoy the rewards of Mars.
To which the general replied, " The very next day robbed me
as I lay exhausted of the sweet light of Phaethon's steeds
and sent me forever to the nether streams of death, but the care
of my companions is slow, while they fulfil the vain formalities
and obsequies the people love. They hesitate to burn my corpse,
but intend to transport it far away to the tombs of my forebears.
I beg of you by our shared rivalry in arms, protect my limbs
from those medicaments that ward off foul decomposition,
and grant the swiftest passage of my purgatorial soul to hell!"

Then Scipio spoke, " Most noble son of ancient Clausus' line,
although the demands upon my time weigh heavily, not one
of them will outweigh your request[15]. Throughout the known
world these practices differ and opinions are at variance
regarding funeral rites and disposal of the ashes of the dead.
In Spain, men say, (it is an ancient custom) for a filthy bird,
for a vulture to consume the lifeless bodies of the dead.
When those of royal blood have died in Hyrcania's realm
it is right for dogs to have their way. Egyptians enclose
the corpse upright in a tomb of stone, an honoured place,
and welcome to their feasts exsanguinated skeletons[16].
It is the custom of the Black Sea folk to evacuate the brain
and keep the dead man's head embalmed for years to come.
Again, the Garamantes bury their naked dead in a grave dug
in the sand, while on Libya's shores the Nasamones entrust
their lifeless dead to the tender mercies of the cruel sea.
The Celts – an abomination! – gild the trepanned empty skulls
of their dead and treasure them at table as drinking cups!
The men of Athens, Cecropidae, decreed that all who died
in Mars's lottery should share cremation on a single pyre,
while the Scythians pin their deceased to trees and the slow
duration of days disposes at length of the liquefied dead."

As they talked in this way the shade of the elder Sibyl came
and Autonoë spoke, " Put a stop at one to this conversation.
For here is the priestess who is the very fertile font of truth,
to whom Apollo has shown so much of affairs that he cannot
in truth claim himself to know more. It is time for me to go
with your men and place the sacrificial beasts upon the fire."

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[15] The following passage, vv. 468 – 487 was considered as probably spurious and not composed by Silius by Duff, as being, as he wrote *ad loc.* "out of place and unworthy of the writer." It is included here for the sake of completeness.

[16] As *memento mori*: cf, the articulated model skeletal manikin toy at Trimalchio's feast in Petronius' *Satyrica.*

But when that crone of Cumae, gravid with secret truths,
had tasted with her lips the sacrificial victims' blood,
she bent her gaze upon the face of this most noble youth
and said, "While still I enjoyed the heavenly light of day,
my voice resounded for the people in my Cumaean cave.
And then I sang of you and your future deeds entwined
with the fate of Rome, but your Romans took scant note
of my advice: for your ancestors had not sufficient wit
to collect and conserve my words of prophecy.
But come now, boy, and learn your fate, since it is your will
to learn, and the fate of Rome that depends on yours.
For indeed I see your determined eagerness to seek from me
the revelation of your life and gaze upon your ancestral dead.
Entrusted prematurely with supreme command[17] you will
as victor in battle on the Ebro's banks avenge your father's death,
and with your sword cut short the Carthaginian celebrations.
You will celebrate yourself your capture of Cartagena in Spain.
A favourable omen this for war and greater commands to come[18],
nor will Jupiter relax his concern for you until he has pursued
the battleground to Africa and has himself brought Hannibal
to defeat at your hands. And Rome will be ashamed herself
when after such deeds this hero loses both home and land[19]."
The priestess spoke, then turned back to Tartarus' dark pools.

Then Scipio, in turn, " However harsh my fated lot in life,
I shall yet overcome! Only let my soul be innocent of guilt.
But, holy virgin, since it ever was your life's great cause
to help us in our human toils and tribulations, pray – stay
your steps and recount for us the spirits of the silent dead
and reveal as well the dreadful Stygian catacombs of hell."

She nodded her assent, but said, " The realm you would reveal
is not to be desired. Here flutter and dwell among the shades
the countless ranks of all the dead. One single resting place for all!
In the midst there stretches out far and wide an infinite void.
And hither all that has been born of earth and sea and the fiery air
since time's first primal age of mundane generation, the doom
of a communal Death has sent: all things descend, the plain inert
grants welcome to all of creation past and creation yet to come.
Ten gates encircle this realm: of which one receives the shades
of warriors, men born to bear the unforgiving lottery of Mars,
a second men born to make laws and fine foundations for both
the peoples' civic order and the fortifications of their city walls;
a third receives the farmers, honest devotees of Ceres, who come
to Hades untainted by the toxins of politics, graft and fraud.

[17] Scipio was only 24 years old when he accepted command of the Roman forces in Spain in 211 BCE.
[18] Scipio held the consulship in 205 BCE.
[19] In 187 BCE Scipio was brought to trial on corruption charges on the instigation of Cato Maior whereupon the former hero retired to Liternum until his death soon afterwards in c. 183 BCE.

The next the threshold for men who founded the liberal arts
and the means by which we live a cultivated life, who poured
forth poetry not unworthy of lord Phoebus Apollo himself!
The next is for those devoured at sea by storm and tempest,
and called the Shipwreck Gate, for this is its appointed name.
Hard by the sixth whose mouth gapes foul for those burdened
by the load of sins confessed: Rhadamanthus sits by the entrance
to seek capital punishment to inflict upon the insensate dead.
The seventh gate is opened for the regiments of women,
where chaste Proserpina nourishes the well watered groves.
Hence the path known for groups of weeping babes who died
on life's brink, and maidens, whose wedding torches served
instead to illuminate their deadly funeral rites and obsequies.
Then next in a place apart divorced from darkling night is set
a shining gate which leads through a shaded and secret way
to the meadows of Elysium. Here lives the congregation of
the blessed, nor in the Stygian realm nor yet set beneath
the heaven's pole, but beyond the stream of Oceanus beside
the holy spring where they drink of Lethe's waters of oblivion.
And then the tenth and last, a gate of shining gold, endowed
with light which glows as if the body of the moon lay hard by.
From here the souls seek out the heavens again and when
a thousand years are passed they are reborn forgetful of Dis[20].
Here pallid Death opens wide her dark and dismal jaws to pass
passim here and there, wandering between each and every gate.
Then there spreads far and wide a sluggish marsh across the plain
with muddy meres of slime devoid of life, while Phlegethon's fiery
and overflowing stream consumes its banks, and with turbine blast
of echoing flame hurls incandescent rocks along its seething course.
Elsewhere raging Cocytus seethes too with vortices of black gore
as it raves headlong and turbulent with foaming gouts of blood.
But then the marshy Styx, by which ever the gods and their king
deem worthy to swear, a flood quite horrid with its river of pitch,
as it roils along its streams of steaming and sulphurous mire.
More grim than these churns toxic Acheron with venom thick
and belching forth deep frozen sand with seismic growl, as down
it flows lethargic through the dark and stagnant shallow swamp.
With multiple mouths drinks Cerberus from this sickening stream,
providing draughts for Tisiphone too, while black Megara sups,
but cannot assuage her maddening thirst, however much she drinks.
And lastly there wells up a streaming river of abundant tears
before the royal court of Dis and the inexorable door of the god.
That courtyard provides a vigilant home for monsters manifold,
whose mingled and cacophonous cries affright the lifeless dead!
Here lurk gluttonous Grief, and Emaciation, friend of foul disease,
and Woe that feasts on floods of tears and Pallor, exsanguinate,
with Guilt and its sibling Treachery and Old Age ever querulous,
and Envy bent on peevish double handed strangulation of self,
Delusion too with faltering step and Strife that takes delight

[20] Pluto.

in confounding sea and sky, while the gatekeeper Briareus
squats here, his customary task to open the gates of deadly Dis
with his one hundred hands, and the maiden Sphinx,
her virgin jaws agape, stained red with human blood,
with Scylla too, savage Centaurs and dead Giants' ghosts.
Here Cerberus stalks Tartarus when he breaks his chains,
when neither Allecto nor Megaera, mother of madness
dare approach the hound as he bays - one thousand chains
snapped – and whips his serpentine tail about his loins.
On the right a mighty yew tree spreads wide its leaves
and branches, fed and watered by the streams of Cocytus.
Here ill-omened birds abound, the vultures, carrion fed,
and many owls, screech owls, their feathers blood stained.
The Harpies cherish here their nests and perch in droves
on each leafy branch – the tree raves with their harsh cries.
Midst these phenomena there sat on a throne raised high
the spouse of Avernian Juno[21] who judged the crimes of kings.
These stand in chains and too late regret their guilt before the judge.
The Furies hover there and manifold visions of Punishment.
Oh, how they wish they had never reflected the sheen of despotism!
Dead spirits, undeserving victims of injustice, rail at the tyranny
of harsh emperors. The charges which were unlawful to make
while still they lived, can with impunity at last be voiced.
One criminal is affixed to a crag with savage iron chains,
another heaves a massive boulder to the mountain's top,
Megaera ever subjects another to her scourge of toxic snakes.
Such punishments lie in wait for homicidal autocrats.
But now is the time for you to look upon your mother's face,
whose ghostly shade approaches first with hurried steps."

Pomponia stood by, once pregnant with the secret seed of Jove[22].
For when Venus learned the arms of Carthage were being raised
against Rome, she strove to anticipate Juno's machinations,
and implanted by gradual degrees a slowly burning flame
in her father's heart, and had her foresight not accomplished this,
a Carthaginian maid would now be kindling the Vestal fires.
And so when the ghost had tasted blood, and the Sybil advised
her, granting leave to them both to recognize the other's face,
the young man spoke first, "Mother, as great to me as any deity,
dear parent, to be so granted leave to look upon you here! I have
now gladly chosen to enter the Stygian land of deathly shades!
What sort of Fate was mine, whose first day of life robbed me
of you? It was a day of funereal dread that stole you far away!"
His mother answered, "My son, my death caused me no pain
nor suffering[23]. When I was relieved of the heavenly burden

[21] The "Avernian Juno" i.e. Queen of the Underworld is Proserpina, whose spouse is Pluto, Lord of the Underworld and infernal judge of the newly dead.
[22] See Duff *ad loc.* "The legend here set forth, that Jupiter, in the form of a serpent, was the father of Scipio, seems to have been believed by the vulgar at Rome; and Scipio himself was perhaps not unwilling that it should be believed."
[23] Pomponia died giving birth to Scipio.

I bore, Mercury psychopompos took me gently by the hand
on Jupiter's command and escorted me to the Elysian fields,
and granted me a seat of honour to match that of Alcumena,
the mother of Hercules, and Leda's, with equal sacred rites.
But come, my son, and learn at last your heritage so you
may have no fear of wars, nor doubt your deeds will win
you immortality, since now I have the right to reveal it all.
I was by myself at midday and resting to catch up on sleep
much needed, when suddenly my limbs were wrapped
in a tight and unfamiliar embrace, unlike my husband's quite,
and though sleep then filled my languorous eyes, I beheld,
in the his unearthly radiance, believe me, pray, Lord Jupiter!
Nor did the deity's gross change of shape deceive me, though
he had shifted into the sinister shape of a squamous snake
that drew along behind its huge and all enveloping coils.
But after I had given you birth, I was not allowed to prolong
my life more. And how I grieved that my soul had dispersed
to the winds, before I could gift you word of these things!"
So moved was Scipio he sought to clasp his mother's neck.
In vain! Three times the insubstantial ghost fled his embrace.

Two images in company took his mother's place, the shades
of his father and uncle in unity of heart. He rushed through
the dark to seek in vain their kisses – the young man strove
to take hold of spirits like unto shifting smoke and clouds.
"Which god, dear father, hated Latium so much he carried
you off, the cornerstone of Rome? Good grief! For why did I
absent my savage self so many moments from your side?
I might have thrust myself between, exchanged our deaths.
How great the cries of mourning that greeted your demise
through all of Italy! The senate have decreed a double tomb
be constructed for you upon the greensward Field of Mars."
They let him say no more, but began to speak themselves
while still he spoke. His father's shade addressed him first,
"Virtue is in itself a man's very own most beautiful reward!
Yet it comes as gratifying to the dead, when their life's fame
survives their death, nor does oblivion devour their memory.
But come and speak of the burden, young Scipio, our pride,
of the war which weighs you down. Fear enters my heart
whenever I recall your reckless charge, when in the throes
of deadly peril! I call to witness the causes of our deaths
in battle, my bravest of sons – control your lust for Mars!
Let our house's history suffice! The eighth harvest time
was milling the vibrant ears of wheat since the land of Spain
was subjected to my heel in its entirety, and forced in defeat
by my brother to pass beneath the grim yoke of subjugation.
The walls and town of pitiful Saguntum were built again by us,
we granted safe access to the drinking waters of Guadalquivir;
three, four times, Hannibal's indomitable brother, Hasdrubal
turned tail before us. Agh! Good faith in barbarians is forever
foolishness! When I was in pursuit of Hasdrubal, his force

much eroded by defeats, of a sudden our venal Spanish troops,
enslaved by Libyan gold, deserted our eagles and battle line.
The enemy then, enlarged by our deserters, outnumbered us
by far and encircled our smaller force, and hemmed us in
on all sides, surrounding us… Our final act was not spent
in idleness, my son, nor was it wasted with no savage toll
exacted. We ended our lives' performance in glorious death."

His brother then conjoined the story of his own demise,
" When all was lost and I found myself in the direst straits,
I took refuge in a tall tower and fought my last stand there.
The foe hurled smoking torches and a thousand brands
of fire – the flames blazed everywhere! I make no complaint
to the gods about my death: my limbs were not fated to burn
in any common sepulchre, and I met death in my full panoply.
Yet grief holds me fast lest after the death we brothers shared,
a defeated Spain has succumbed once more to Punic force."

Young Scipio answered this, his face distorted with tears,
" Immortal gods, I pray that Carthage pays just punishment
for these heinous crimes. But now a famous warrior holds
in check the savage tribes of the Pyrenees, a man who won
his martial spurs with you, Lucius Marcius Septimus who saved
our vanquished troops, advanced the war. Word is he has
in battle crushed the Carthaginians and avenged your deaths."
Rejoicing at this news the generals returned to the Elysian fields
and the young man's gaze followed their path with reverence.

And now scarcely recognizable in the gloom Paulus came near,
and once he had drunk of the blood these words issued forth,
" Bright glory of Rome, whose warlike deeds I have observed
to far surpass those of any single man, who has compelled you
to descend and visit these nocturnal and inescapable realms?"
And then young Scipio answered him in words such as these,
" Commander, skilled in arms, your fate has long been mourned
through Rome! How very close your ruinous fall and death came
to dragging the city of Rome down to the Stygian depths and shade.
At the time of your death the Carthaginian foe erected a tomb
for your corpse and sought to gain praise by so honouring you."
While Paulus wept at the thought of an enemy's burying him,
Flaminius and then next Gracchus appeared before Scipio's eyes
and with sad face there stood also Servilius, a victim of Cannae.
Young Scipio burned to address them by name and talk with them,
but a heartfelt need to know the dead heroes of old distracted him.

And now he saw Brutus whose savage axe earned for him
immortal fame[24], and Camillus whose own fame matched
the immortals'[25] and Curius, a man with no affection for gold[26].

[24] This early Brutus had his sons beheaded for joining in a conspiracy to restore the Tarquins to power.
[25] In 390 B.C. Camillus defeated the Gallic chief Brennus after the sacking of Rome.

The Sibyl identified each coming face and revealed its name,
"This man, deprived of sight, drove Pyrrhus and his false offer
of peace from the gates[27]; Horatius there repelled Lars Porsena's
assault upon the Tiber's banks and, when the bridge crashed down
behind him, in savage isolation he held the returning tyrant at bay.
If it be your wish to see the man who concluded a peace treaty
with Carthage after the First Great War, there stands Lutatius
before you, victor in that great and decisive fleet battle at sea.
Or if it is your passion to be acquainted with the savage shade
of Hamilcar, see – there he his, upon whose brow he still keeps
the imprint of a rage unalloyed even in death. If you wish to join
in speech with him, let him drink of the blood and give tongue."
And so when leave was given and the thirsty ghost had drunk
his fill, then Scipio first railed at him, his face an inimical mask,
" Is such the way you keep your sworn word, you father of lies?
Is such the treaty you made when a prisoner on Sicily's shores?
Your son is currently waging war throughout the land of Italy
in contravention of all agreements made, has broken through
all barriers, crossed the Aps to assail us. The folk of Italy are ablaze
in a foreign war. Our rivers, dammed with the dead, reverse their flow."
To which the Carthaginian replied, "My son had just completed his
tenth year when he began on my command to wage his war with Rome,
nor may he rightly disappoint the very gods by whom his father swore
his inviolable oath, but if his fires now lay the realms of Italy waste,
and strive to overturn the fortunes of those refugees from Troy…
what filial piety, what a sacred sense of duty, so true to his bloodline!
I would he may restore our honour lost!" And then with hasty step
and head aloft he left and seemed to grow in stature as he went.

And then the priestess pointed out the decemvirs[28] who empowered
by martial rule gave a code of laws to the citizens on their own demand
and first blended laws imported from Athens' port with those of Italy.
Scipio's delight and desire to look upon the faces of these noble men
was insatiable and he would fain have addressed them all had not the Sibyl
in her majesty warned him of their infinitude, " How many thousands of ghosts
from all the earth do you believe have come down to Erebus while you gaze
upon these individuals? Each and every moment without fail an endless flood
of the deceased is driven here and Charon ferries their ranks across the Styx
in his vast craft, which huge as it is can scarce accommodate their serried ranks."
Then after these words the priestess pointed out a young man and spoke again,
"This is that man who, victorious, bore his arms across the ways of the whole
wide world, by whom Bactra was traversed and the Scythian lands, who drank
from the Ganges and bridged the Niphates[29] with his native Macedonian skill,
whose own Alexandrian city walls do stand on the banks of the sacred Nile."

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[26] Consul in 290 B.C. Manius Curius Dentatus refused to take bribes from either the Samnites or Pyrrhus.
[27] This was Appius Claudius Caecus (the Blind) who rejected a peace offer from Pyrrhus.
[28] See Duff *ad loc.* "The decemvirs who were supreme at Rome from 451 to 449 B.C.; they drew up the Twelve Tables, the first Roman code of laws, which was based upon Athenian law."
[29] A river in Armenia.

Aeneas' descendant[30] began, "Offspring most certain of Libyan Ammon,
your certain military fame has eclipsed that of all the other generals
and my heart burns with a similar lust to achieve such dynamic success.
Pray tell me by what route you could propel yourself to such giddy heights
of fame, and ascend the very citadel and summit of noble reputation!"
Alexander spoke, "A slow and sluggish approach to Mars breeds ignominy!
Decisiveness progresses wars! A reluctant virtue has not yet achieved,
nor will extend a man's fame! Precipitate the critical time and so achieve
great, glorious things! Dark death hovers close by your endeavours."
He spoke these words of advice and departed. Next Croesus' fluttering shade
flew near: in life a man of great wealth, in death on a par with the poor.

At this point Scipio saw a figure bending its course along the paths
of Elysium, a man whose flowing locks were held modestly in place
by a purple fillet on his shining neck, and the young man asked,
"Who, Maiden, is this ghost? For a distinctive light shines bright
on his sacred brow, and an entourage of admiring spirits follow him
as devotees and crowd about him with joyous cries of wonderment.
What a countenance! For were he not a ghostly shade in Hades' halls,
I could easily name him deity!" And Diana's learned handmaid spoke,
"You are quite right, since he has deserved to be seen as a god indeed,
and in his magnanimous heart there dwelt no mean creative power.
His songs embraced the earth, the sea, the stars, the underworld
and rivalled in repute those of the Muses and of Phoebus himself.
And all hereabouts he revealed to the world of mortal men, before
he saw these things himself, and gave stellar fame to your city of Troy."
Young Scipio allowed his joyful gaze to linger on Homer's shade
and said, "If only the Fates might grant it that this poet might sing
the deeds of Rome across the earth, how much greater an impact
might those deeds make upon posterity with Homer to witness them!
How fortunate Achilles was to have his fame noised abroad by such
a voice! The poet's epic song increased his fame and virtue both."

Then, when he sought the nature and names of the crowd of ghosts
that pressed forward, he heard they were the host of heroes dead.
He marvelled at Achilles' shade and at that of mighty Hector too,
at Ajax' giant stride and admired the venerable face of aged Nestor,
took joy in seeing the two sons of Atreus, Agamemnon, Menelaus,
and now the Ithacan[31], his guile a match for Achilles' deeds of arms.
And then he saw the shade of Castor, Leda's son, soon to be reborn,
while brother Pollux was spending his turn in the bright light above.

But suddenly Lavinia was identified and attracted his attention.
For the priestess advised him that the time was come to recognize
the ghosts of women, before the kindly dawn reproved his tardiness.
"She was happy," she said, " as daughter-in-law of Venus whose line
united both Trojans and the men of Latium for many generations.
Do you wish to see the spouse of Romulus, bride of the son of Mars?
Behold Hersilia! When the Sabines rejected their hirsute neighbours

[30] Young Scipio.
[31] Ulysses.

she was snatched away by a shepherd to be his bride, entered his hut
and quite happily laid her body down, supported on his rustic bed
of straw, and persuaded her kin to withdraw from the threat of arms.
See where Carmentis[32] walks. She was the mother of Evander and she
foretold as prophetess the struggles of this present war with Carthage.
Would you look upon the face of Tanaquil[33]? She too was chaste of heart,
possessed prophetic powers and foretold her husband's future rule
and could read the favour of the gods in the flight of winged birds.
Behold the model of Roman chastity, Lucretia, famous for her death,
her suicide, who has fixed her modest face and gaze upon the earth.
But sadly, Rome, you were not allowed to keep for long the name
of chastity, a prize beyond compare. For hard by stands Verginia.
See there where she carries still the wound in her bloodied breast,
the woeful memorial of her maidenhood defended by the sword.
And still she praises her father's righteous and harsh injurious hand[34].
And there is Cloelia[35] who stemmed the Tiber's flow to halt the men
of Etruria's arms, regardless of her gentler sex. The like of whom
the men of ancient Rome would have wished to sire as their sons."
Then disturbed by a sudden cruel vision Scipio demanded the cause
of that maiden's punishment and the guilty spirit's true identity,
and then the Sibyl, " She broke her father's limbs beneath her chariot,
then hauled upon her reins to come to rest above his quivering face,
one Tullia[36], who floats forever on the fiery streams of Phlegethon,
and will never end her suffering. The river rages from dark furnaces
of fire, speeds headlong, driving burned out rocks beneath its flood
to batter her wretched face with incandescent, volcanic debris.
That woman whose entrails are forever cropped by an eagle's beak –
and listen to the resounding beat of wings as Jupiter's bird of prey,
his bearer of arms, returns to its repast! – is Tarpeia. She betrayed
our citadel to hostile forces, a heinous crime, and did it for a lust
for gold and bribes and threw wide the gates to the Sabine troops.
Next, can't you see? No trivial misdemeanours are punished here!
There Orthrus[37], the hound of Geryon[38], bays with famished jaws,
the one time guardian servant of the monstrous Spanish king,
his maw and unclean claws seek her out for disembowelment.
Her punishment is still less than her crime! She fouled the shrine
of Vesta, sacrificing her virginity, although she was priestess.
But you have seen enough, enough of this!" She then continued,
" But now I intend to muster for your attention the ranks at the last
of those few shades who drink of oblivion. Then I return to the dark.
This is Marius: not many days remain before he makes his way
to the ethereal light above. From humble origins he will become
your consul for many a year; and nor can Sulla long procrastinate

[32] A Roman goddess of prophecy, the mother of Evander who travelled with him from Arcadia to Latium.
[33] The wife of the elder Tarquin.
[34] See Duff *ad loc.* "She was stabbed by her father, to save her from the lust of Appius Claudius."
[35] See Bk. 10. 402ff.
[36] The murderous daughter of Servius Tullius and wife and queen of L. Tarquinius.
[37] The hound of Geryon.
[38] Triple bodied king of Spain who was slain by Hercules.

his call to life or his drinking of Lethe's waters of forgetfulness.
The daylight summons him and the gods' immutable fate.
He first will seize dictatorial power, but glory comes from guilt
since he alone will resign his office nor shall another ever live
to gain such fame and be willing then to follow Sulla's precedent.
And there is Pompey the Great, a fine head of hair to shade his brow[39],
a man universally admired; that other there is Trojan Caesar, a man
who claims descent divine from Iulus, Aeneas' son. What massed
destruction and war will these two wreak on land and sea
when at the last they break out from their long seclusion here!
How wretched are you that will wage deadly war across the globe,
and the victor Julius will pay no less a penalty than Pompey crushed![40]"

Then Scipio spoke in tears, " I weep at the savage fate that lies
in store for the men of Rome, but if there is no pardon allowed
when life is done and death brings just deserts on guilty men,
will the Carthaginian leader cauterize his perfidy and crimes
in the fiery streams of Phlegethon, or will some bird of prey
forever tear and lacerate his living corpse, forever renewed?"
" Fear not!" the Sibyl cried. " No life inviolate will lie in wait
for the Carthaginian: his bones will not rest in his native land.
For in the test of a mighty battle[41] his fortunes will fail and crash,
while he will suffer defeat himself and beg for shameful clemency,
then lust once more to refresh his war with the arms of Macedon.
Condemned of treachery he will desert his faithful wife and son
so sweet and abandon Carthage, its citadels and city walls,
and as an exile in a single ship he will take to wandering the seas.
Thence he will visit the rocky peaks of Taurus in Cilicia.
Observe how much more possible it is for mortal men to face
down slavery, harsh flight through summer heat and winter's chill,
the perils of the sea than simple death! And after his Italian wars
as servant to an Assyrian king and disappointed in his hopes
for Rome he will set once more a dubious sail across the sea,
until he is brought becalmed to the shores controlled by Prusias[42]
to suffer shameful servitude once more, too old to carry arms,
a secret client of a complaisant king. His final act when Rome
persist in demanding that her enemy be surrendered to them
is to snatch a goblet and drain a draught of poisoned wine
to liberate at last the world from a protracted source of dread."

So spoke the Sibyl and returned to Erebus and her dark caves.
Then young Scipio was glad to return to port and his companions.

[39] In contrast perhaps to Julius Caesar's self-conscious baldness.
[40] Both men died violent deaths at the hands of assassins.
[41] Hannibal was defeated in 202 BCE by Scipio himself at the battle of Zama where Scipio earned the honorific name "Africanus".
[42] Prusias was king of Bithynia. Hannibal swallowed poison after the Romans demanded his surrender. For a telling description of this anticlimactic finale to Hannibal's career see Juvenal, *Satires* 10. 147-167.

Punica: Book 14

Silius Italicus

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Punica Bk. 14

Marcellus campaigns in Sicily. Sicily is described (1-70). *Causes of war. Death of Hiero, king of Syracuse and the succession of Hieronymus* (70-95). *The murder of Hieronymus and the following confusion in the city* (96-109). *Marcellus prepares* (110-124). *He takes the city of Leontini by storm* (125-177). *Marcellus blockades Syracuse* (178-191). *The Syracusan allies* (192-247). *Sicilian allies of Carthage* (248-276). *The Syracusans are very confident* (277-291). *The engineer Archimedes foils the siege efforts of the Romans* (292-352). *A sea battle takes place* (353-579). *There is an outbreak of the plague which delays matters* (560-617). *Finally the Romans take the city* (618-684).

Turn now your epic songs, Muses divine of Helicon,
to Ortygia's[1] sea and the maritime cities of Sicily's shore.
For this is your weighty labour now, to visit the land
of Italy, home of the Aeneadae, and approach the port
of Sicily, cross Macedonian lands to the realm of Greece,
or dip your vagrant feet in the seas that bound Sardinia,
or visit the hamlets once ruled by the men of Carthage,
or the far western lands at the end of the sun's daily race.
This is Mars' demand, his battles scattered far and wide.
Come where the trumpets blast! Let us follow the wars!

Three cornered[2] Sicily is a large component of Italy's land
and lays where beset by the storming south winds and waves,
where Neptune's trident made passage for the invasive sea.
For the thrust unseen of the tide, propelled by the storm's
blind violence, disembowelled the shattered torso of land,
and in full tsunami flood inundated the rustic fields, swept
away all the cities and towns and their populations alike.
Since then swift running Nereus has maintained the split,
forbad reunion of the severed lands with his savage tides.
But the gap which dissociates the separated lands is small:
word is the straits are so narrow one can hear from across
the bark of dogs and the dawn chorale of feathered birds.
There is much goodness in the soil: for here it rewards
the plough, while here the hills give olives shade, make fine
wines, breed swift horses, well suited to the blast of war,
while Hybla's nectar rivals that of Athens' honeycombs.
Here too you will admire the secret healing qualities
of sulphurous hot springs and the works of mighty poets,
all worthy of Apollo and the Muses, who make resound
with Heliconian song the sacred groves of Sicily.
Sicilians are fluent of tongue; but when they waged war
this race adorned their ports with trophies won at sea[3].

After Antiphates'[4]cruel rule and that of the Cyclopes

[1] Ortygia is a small island which is part of the city of Syracuse.
[2] "Trinacria", see Duff, "Sicily… has three promontories, Pelorus, Pachynus and Lilybaeum.
[3] Notably against the Athenians in the ill fated "Syracusan Expedition" of 415 – 413 BCE.
[4] He was king of the Laestrygonians: see Bk. 8. 530.

the Sicani first ploughed and turned the virgin soil of Sicily:
the Pyrenees despatched them and they imposed the name
on the vacant land of an unknown river in their original home.
Next a young band of Ligurians under Siculus established a new
regime by conquest in war and changed the name of his prize[5].
A colony from Crete enhanced its fame, which Minos brought
to an unfortunate war from his hundred citied island of Crete
to punish Daedalus. Minos died through the lawless treachery
of the Cocalidae[6] and descended into the endless dark to sit
as a judge in Hades' courts, while his followers, exhausted
by the constant pursuit of war, settled down in Sicily.
Two Trojan warriors, Acestes and Helymus both enriched
the breeding stock of Sicily with their followers and built
two enduring cities that bear their names to this day[7].
Nor yet do Zancle's city walls themselves lack durable fame,
fame won by the fact that Saturn laid down his sickle there[8].
But there is nothing more fine in the land of Proserpina's rape
than Syracuse that took its name from the isthmus of Corinth
and outshines all others by far because of its Corinthian origins.
Her Arethusa[9] welcomed her Alpheus to waters fertile in fish,
when he comes and carries trophies won at the sacred games.

But hostile Vulcan loves the caves of three-cornered Sicily.
For Lipare's[10] interior is consumed by massive furnaces
and vomits sulphurous fumes from its mountain's crater.
Meantime Etna belches forth thunderous pent up flames
from her shuddering cliffs and in imitation of the raging sea
she voices thunder ever restless crashing through both day
and night. A torrent of flames as if from the dark font
of fiery Phlegethon, like napalm, erupts from the liquid depths
to generate a twisting tornado of red hot volcanic bombs.
Although the mountain seethes with perpetual inward flames,
and her nether fires are constantly renewed and refreshed,
her peak remains white with snow and – *mirabile dictu* –
she juxtaposes ice and fire and her fiery summit is gripped
with everlasting frosts, and an eternal winter there abides
to clothe Etna's hot snows beneath a dark blanket of ash.

Why mention the lands that are the royal domain of Aeolus,
the home of the winds and the holding cells of winter storms?
Here Sicily's south eastern cape is turned towards the lands
of Pelops and its cliffs confront the breakers of the Ionian sea.
Here noble Lilybaeum is set to challenge Libya and the furious

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[5] From Sicania to Sicily.
[6] See Duff, *ad loc.* "They killed Minos by pouring hot water over him when he was in the bath."
[7] These were Egesta and Elyma.
[8] Duff again, *ad loc.* "Zancle, *sickle*, was the ancient Greek name of Messina, derived from its shape."
[9] See Duff, *ad loc,* "A fountain in Syracuse: it was supposed that the Alpheus, a river of Elis, flowed under the sea to meet Arethusa, and brought with it the crowns that Olympian heroes had cast into the stream."
[10] Islands north of Sicily.

north westerly storms, to see Scorpio's stars sink down to the sea.
And third and last the north eastern cape of Sicily reaches out
for Italy and its stony spine extends its hilly ridge to the shore,
Pelorus raising high from its massy base its dunes of sand.

For many years the gentle ruler Hiero held placid dominion
here, a man with the tranquil mana to govern his population
with becoming grace, who never would utilize terror to stir
his citizens' fearful hearts, and, not a man lightly to break
a sacred oath on an altar sworn, he kept his formal alliance
secure and unbroken with Rome for many on many a year.
However, when the Fates unstrung the man with fragile age[11],
the deadly sceptre fell into his immature grandson's hands,
and the peaceful palace inherited a tyrant's manner of rule.
The young Hieronymus was not yet sixteen and bemused
by his lofty state and unable quite to bear the burden of rule,
he placed too much trust in the shifting sands of destiny.
Very soon the rule of law was gone and lawlessness ruled:
the sword defended his crimes. The tyrant's least regard
was for common decency. His utter lack of any restraint
on appetite was kindled by a mother's descent from Pyrrhus,
the race of the Aeacidae and of Achilles, immortal in song[12].
Therefore his sudden desire to foster the plans of Carthage,
nor did he delay his crime, but made a new treaty that said
that Hannibal, Rome conquered, should then abandon Sicily.
But retribution was near, and the Fury denied him a tomb
in the land in which he had chosen never to see his friends.
A group of avowed conspirators could not easily tolerate
the young man's savage pride and peculiar blend of bloodlust
and luxury, and sore inflamed in their hearts by rage and fear
they killed him. Nor did that sate the sword! They compound
the crime with female deaths and cut down with the sword
his innocent sisters. Their new found freedom revelled in arms,
rejected tyranny's yoke: some favoured the bellicose hopes
of Carthage, some those of their former Italian friends,
while some, a mob of fiery souls preferred a neutral stance.

Such was the chaotic state of affairs in Sicily caused by the death
of the king when Marcellus, honoured with the highest office
(three times the Latin rods of office and consular purple were his)
had brought his armada to drop anchor in the port of Messana.
When all was revealed to the general – the murder of the tyrant,
the confused political landscape, the nature of the Carthaginian
demesne and its full extent, which cities still endured to keep
their faith with Italy and with Rome, the grossly swollen pride

[11] Hiero III died in 215 BCE at more than ninety years of age and was succeeded as king of Syracuse by his fifteen year old grandson, Hieronymus.
[12] Pyrrhus of Epirus, "famous" for his *Pyrrhic* victory over Rome, when supporting the Greek people of Tarentum in their opposition to Roman rule in the Pyrrhic War (280–275 BCE) claimed to be descended from Achilles.

of Syracuse, so obdurate in maintaining her gates still shut
he at once embarked on total war, his heart inflamed with rage,
and swiftly unleashed the pestilence of arms upon the land.
Just so the North-wind, when plunging in headlong descent
from the peaks of Rhodope, lets loose the sea and its great
tenth wave on the land and roaring follows the surging mass,
expelled from the sea, to howl and wail on seething wings.
His campaign first laid waste to the plains of Leontini – lands
once ruled by the fearsome Laestrygonian king, Antiphates.
Marcellus pressed on: a leader who deemed that any delay
in defeating Greeks equated with defeat. He raced across
the battlefield, as if his men contested it with mere feeble girls,
and fertilized the land with blood, as a pleasing gift for Ceres.
The dead littered the ground. The speed of battle overtook
any survivors who ran, and when flight seemed to promise
salvation, the general anticipated them with sword in hand.
" Advance," he cried, " lay low this cowardly crew with steel,"
as he drove on any tardy troops with the boss of his shield.
" A youthful band of cowards awaits you, who bring no pride
to their victors, trained but to endure easy wrestling bouts
in the shade, delighting in the gleaming sheen of anointed oils.
The sole possible source of glory here is instant victory."
His whole army advanced, taking heed of the general's words.
The soldiers' sole motivation now was their mutual rivalry:
who would excel with the sword, who win the richest spoils?
The tides of the Euboean Euripus do not rage more fiercely
through their rocky channel, nor does Propontis eject
its sounding seas more violently from its straitened mouth;
nor do the waves that surge and break against Gibraltar's rock
resound with greater tumult at the world's far western end.

And yet contained within that battle there was a merciful act
that won resplendent fame. There was a Tuscan soldier named
Asilus, captured long before at the battle of Lake Trasimene,
whose servitude was easy, as he obeyed the gentle rule of Beryas,
his master and captor. Asilus had returned to his native shores
with his master's blessing and was once more on active service,
to make good his former calamity in this new Sicilian war.
And while this man was engaged in the bitter battle's midst,
he came upon his master, a Carthaginian ambassador now, sent
to treat with the Syracusan king and fighting in his battle line,
his head and face disguised and protected by a helmet of bronze.
He attacked Asilus with his sword, but his rash impetus tripped
his faltering step and so he fell prostrate upon the sandy ground.
But then the wretch, on hearing his victor's voice, as if to recall
his fearful and hesitant soul from Hades' halls, wrenched from
beneath his chin the strap of his brazen and masking helm,
began to beg for mercy and prepared to make further pleas.
Asilus though, shocked by the sudden sight of his familiar face,
withdrew the sword which he held in his hand and uttered
unbidden himself a springing flood of tearful sentiments,

" Do not act the supplicant, I beg of you, and pray for life!
It is right for me to spare my enemy. By far the best in war
is the man, who at first and at the very last, will keep faith
with himself: you granted me an escape from death before,
and kept me safe long before I could return the courtesy.
It would be unworthy of me to deny misfortunes past,
and I should deserve once more to be involved in worse,
if my right hand could not grant you safe passage through
this fiery storm of swords! " As he spoke he raised Beryas
from the ground and paid for his life with the gift of a life.

Meanwhile, Marcellus had won his first engagement on
Sicilian soil and now as he advanced unscathed he turned
his victorious eagles towards the city walls of Syracuse.
He then surrounded the fortifications with his troops.
However, his lust for war had cooled: he hoped to soothe
the city's blind passions with negotiation, defuse their rage.
Yet if by chance they refused him and believed his leniency
a mark of cowardice, he maintained the siege with no let up
of intent, but rather, with unfurrowed brow he maintained
a much more vigilant watch with strictly patterned patrols,
and with arcane strategy devised unprecedented threats.
Just so the white swan floats on Eridanus' gentle stream
or by the banks of Caÿster and lends its unmoving body
to the unruffled surface, its feet working hard beneath.

Meanwhile the thoughts of those besieged were divided,
as Marcellus summoned their neighbours to join him in war:
Messana that lies by the coast and is the closest Sicilian
settlement to Italy, a famous colony of Oscan foundation;
then Catana, too close a neighbour to the volcanic flames
of Typhoeus, celebrated once for the birth of two pious
sons[13], and Camarina[14], told by the Fates not to migrate.
And then Hybla, a confident rival to challenge Hymettus'
honeycombs, and Selinus, planted about with palm trees,
and Mylae, a trusty harbour once, but whose present beach
is a risky haven now for sailors seeking refuge from the sea.
Mt Eryx and its western town and southern Centuripae,
central Entella too, verdant with the flourishing vine,
its name beloved by the exile Acestes[15] after the fall of Troy.

[13] See Duff *ad loc*, "Typhoeus, a giant, was imprisoned under Etna. Two brothers, Amphinomus and Anapias, once carried their parents out of danger when there was an eruption of Etna."

[14] "The city was protected from invasion by a marsh which made a siege of the city almost impossible. However, in the late 5th Century the city began to be plagued by a mysterious illness. The people started to associate the illness with the marsh, and consulted the town oracle about draining it. The oracle told the city leaders not to drain the marsh, and that the plague would pass with time. But the city leaders ignored the Oracle and drained the marsh anyway. Soon, Carthaginians swooped on the city and sieged it with the aid of the newly drained marshland. They broke into the city and massacred every living inhabitant. (Cited from: https://www.cointalk.com/threads/dont-drain-that-marsh-slaughter-in-ancient-sicily.301172/).

[15] Entellus and Acestes were Trojans who were thought, like Aeneas in Latium, to have founded cities in Sicily.

Nor was Thapsus absent, nor Acrae, whose men descended
from their frosty heights; troops gathered from Agyrium
and Tyndaris, its boast the twins divine[16]. The hills of Acragas
despatched a squadron of a thousand horse whose breath
made hot the air and their dust storm reached the empty sky.
Their general was Grosphus, whose shield was engraved
with a fearsome bull, a reminder of an ancient punishment[17].
When men were cooked inside the furnace of the bull,
their cries became its bellowing; you could well believe
that cows were lowing, driven from their cattle sheds.
There was poetic justice, though: the maker of this dread
device himself made tearful moan as he died within the bull.
Also Gela came, named from a river, Halaesa and Palaeca
that breaks in the perjured and deceitful heart of criminals
with instant punishment[18]. Trojan Acesta arrived in turn.
And the Acis which seeks the waves through Etna's lands
and bathes the grateful Nereid with her sweet river's flow.
Upon a time Acis was a rival in love to you, Polyphemus,
and while he fled the rustic rage of your savage heart
he both escaped his enemy and, a river now himself,
did blend his flowing stream with yours, sweet Galatea.
There came those who drink of Hypsa's stream and Alabis'
loud rivers both, and of Achates, whose lucid waters sound loud.
Men too who live beside the springs of the vagrant Chrysa
and the scant waters of Hipparis and the slender easy ford
of Pantagias, and Simaethus' yellow and turgid rapids.
The shores of Thermae, Aeolian mouth of Himera's
stream, ancient home of the poet Stesichorus, armed too
their citizens. The Himera there divides in two, and its
swift flood flows both towards the rising and the falling sun;
the Nebrodes [19]are the source of both divergent springs,
a range of hills richer in shade than any that rise in Sicily.
Steep Henna despatched a sacred band of armed divines[20].
A cave yawns here, revealing an enormous crack in the earth,
and a dismal pathway that descends to the land of the dead,
whence emerged a novel wedding march to lands unknown.
For Pluto, Hades' king, was wounded once by Cupid's shaft
and dared approach the light of day, the gloom of Acheron
abandoned, and drove through void to lands forbidden him.
He raped the maid of Henna and headlong steered his team
of fearful horses, stunned by the sight of heaven's vault,
to return to Hell and secrete his prize among the shades.
Petraea sought the leadership of Rome and an alliance,

[16] The twins Castor and Pollux were the Tyndaridae, the sons of Tyndarus, after whom the northern Sicilian city was named, and siblings of Helen of Troy.
[17] Phalaris was the tyrant of Akragas (now Agrigento) in Sicily, from approximately 570 to 554 BCE who was notorious for the construction of a hollow bull of bronze in which he roasted his enemies.
[18] See Duff *ad loc*. "The sulphur springs there were believed to punish perjury with instant death."
[19] A chain of mountains that runs east to west through Sicily.
[20] See Duff *ad loc.* "There was a famous temple of Ceres at Henna."

as well Callipolis and Engyon of the rock-strewn fields,
Hadranum and Ergetium too, Melita[21], proud of her looms
and woollen cloths, and Calacte, her shores so rich in fish,
and those of Cephaloedium too, a prey to sea borne storms,
which dread the monsters that graze the grey seas' depths,
and those who observe from their home in Tuaromenium
Charybdis inhaling ships, caught in her whirlpool's maw,
then vomiting them forth again, from the deep to the stars.
These troops favoured Rome and the standards of Italy.

The rest of Sicily's cities made common cause with Carthage.
Agathyrna sent a thousand men, as did Trogilus, blown through
by the southerly winds, and Phacelina, home to Taurian Diana.
Panhormos came with three times that number, a city rich
in game, whether you hunt wild beast in the woods, or scour
the sea with nets, or delight in hauling birds from the skies.
Neither was Herbesos idle, nor Naulocha, nor yet did Morgentia,
endowed with her leafy plains, abstain from this treacherous
declaration of war. Amastra joined forces with the troops sent
by the citizens of Menae and Tisse, a city unknown to fame,
and Netum and Mutyce and the youth from the Achaetus' banks.
The men of Drepane came to the Carthaginians aid and those
of Helorus which rings to the sound of waves, and Triocula,
so recently laid waste in the Servile War, and savage Arbela
and mountainous Ietas, Tabas, adept at war and tiny Cossyra,
no bigger than Megara, dared to join forces with the alliance
to help, and Gaulum's isle, a spectacle seen across the sea,
when it resounds with the kingfishers' song and peaceful bears
their floating nests, when the waves are drowsy and calm.
The famous city of Syracuse herself had filled her vast walls
with a conscription of troops and armaments of every type.
The city fathers fired the mob with vain grandiloquence,
a mob easily swayed and delighting in turmoil and unrest,
" The walls and four city forts have never been breached!"
was their boast, " Our city's defensive ploys eclipsed the men
of Athens, as had they the men of Persia in victory at Salamis!
Our folk bore witness! A single battle saw three hundred ships,
triremes sunk, and no vengeance taken by the Athenian fleet,
that fleet, toxophilist Xerxes' nemesis, was sunk without trace."
Two brothers[22], born of a Carthaginian mother in Carthage itself,
inflamed the populace. Their Syracusan sire had reared them
in Africa, when expelled himself from Sicily on a criminal charge.
They demonstrated their mixed heritage, blending Punic wiles
with the frivolity characteristic of their Syracusan legacy.

Marcellus was aware of this and after the rebellion seemed
irremediable he swore by the gods of Sicily and by, Arethusa,
your rivers, lakes and springs that he was called to war
unwillingly, that his enemy had forced him to take up the arms

[21] Modern Malta.
[22] Hippocrates and Epicydes.

he had for so long a time himself rejected, but then finally he
attacked the city's walls with a whirling storm of weaponry,
and assailed the city itself with thunderous arrays of arms.
At once an equal passion seized his men who vied in dynamism.
There was an outstanding tower whose height of many floors
approached the stars, its ten storeys the work of Archimedes,
who had employed in its making a multitude of shady trees.
From here the Syracusans hurled down flaming brands of pine
and rocks and decanted the deadly scourge of blazing pitch.
Then Cimber aimed and fired a flaming arrow at this eminence
from a distance and fixed the fatal shaft in the building's flank.
And Vulcan's flame, assisted by the force of the wind, now fed
and trailed its swelling plague throughout the keep's interior,
triumphantly it scaled the massive edifice and its ten floors,
and swiftly with rapacious flames devoured the crackling wood,
breathed out an enormous pall of smoke to reach the sky above
and, victorious, the flames reached out to lick the teetering roof.
The interior was filled entire with smoke and a darkling cloud,
and not a single man escaped. As if at the strike of a lightning bolt,
the building of a sudden collapsed into a ruinous pile of ash.

By contrast the Roman fleet met with disaster at sea.
For when their ships approached the city and its roofs,
where the harbour's waves slapped gently against the walls,
an unprecedented danger threatened them with cunning dire.
A wooden beam skillfully rounded, all its knots planed away,
like a ship's mast, was used to carry a grappling iron's claw
at its end. And this device let down from the ramparts' top
uplifted the enemy troops to the sky in its mandibils of iron
and then wound back, deposited them in the midst of the town.
Nor did this machine uplift only men, but often the hostile jaws
snared warships, when deployed from above to strike the craft,
descending with its tenacious and grappling jaws of steel.
Then these jaws at once would engage the nearest trireme
and – a wretched sight! – would lift the craft on high to drop
it of a sudden again by an artfully worked system of chains,
and return it with such precipitate force headlong into the sea
that the waves engulfed the ship completely - and its crew!
As well as such anti-siege machinery as this, the city walls
afforded narrow openings through which a man could shoot
his shafts in hidden seclusion, defended by the rampart's mass.
This task was far from free of risk, however, since darts hurled
by the foe could respond through the same narrow apertures.
Greek genius and Archimedes' skills more effective than arms
kept Marcellus and all his threats at bay both by land and sea.
His strategy stalled and was quite helpless before the city walls.

There lived a Syracusan then, the city's everlasting pride, who far
outdid the rest of men in practical intelligence - Archimedes, a man
of humble means, but to whom all of nature's secrets were revealed.
He knew how the rising sun at dawn portended rain when its rays

were gloomy and dim, and whether the earth hung fixed in space
or was itself mobile, and why the earth was girt by Tethys' stream
in her flood and flow, according to nature's unchangeable laws,
as well he understood the struggles between the moon and sea
and so by what rules father Ocean controls his tidal ebb and flow.
The belief that he had numbered the grains of sand in this great orb
of earth was well founded. Men said he had with women's hands
alone manoeuvred ships and megalithic forts up arduous slopes[23].

While Archimedes' engines wore down the Roman military force
and its general, a relieving Carthaginian fleet of a hundred sail
approached in haste and cleft the sea with its armoured beaks.
The citizens of Syracuse were at once revived with sudden hope.
They assembled their fleet and left port to join the Carthaginians.
Nor were the Romans slow in turn to set their arms to the oars
and they dug and buried those oars swift and deep in the sea.
Their oars confounded the waves and the silvery surface foamed
all white at the rate of their stroke, creating a wide spread wake
which trailed behind them as they ploughed the snowy depths.
Both fleets assaulted the deep and the realm of Neptune rang
to a novel disquieting storm and the seas resounded with cries
of battle which echoed back and forth from the neighbouring cliffs.
The Roman warships were now disposed across the open sea
and had with its two battle wings encircled the spreading waves,
so to set a hunter's trap, enclosing the watery battleground.
The enemy fleet formated in similar fashion and advanced
at speed, constricting the glaucous sea with its own two wings.
At once the clangour of trumpets, a braying of fearful brass,
resounded far and wide and echoed across the empty deep,
and roused Triton himself in alarm from the very depths,
as their cacophonous din bid fair to drown his conch's call.
The combatants were scarce aware of the sea as with so great
an effort they pressed forward to fight and took their stance,
crouched, swaying on the deck's edge to hurl their armaments,
while the sea between the ships was littered with spent weaponry,
as the wooden craft surged high, such was the breathless effort
of the gasping crews which cut a foaming wake across the sea.

The concussive shock of an enemy craft on their beam smashed
away the oars from some of the ships, while others were caught
up tight in the breach their beaks had made in an enemy hull,
unable to disengage. In the midst of the fray one towering ship
progressed, a formidable sight, than which no bigger man of war
had ever been launched from the shipyards of the Carthaginians[24].
This vessel stroked the seas with a total of four hundred oars,
but when in all her pride her spread of canvas engaged the swift
north wind and her outer sails collected each and every breeze
she moved her massive bulk and made her way through the waves

[23] The meaning here is unclear, although Duff tries to elucidate in a note *ad loc.* "This may refer to some religious ceremony in which men might not take part: cp. xvii. 16 foll."
[24] This was the flagship of the Carthaginian fleet under the command of the admiral, Himilco.

as slowly as if she were propelled by the power of her oars alone.
However, the craft that carried the Roman troops were light
and nimble and readily responded to their helmsmen's hands.

When Himilco saw these ships advance across the waves
intent on outflanking his port wing and ordered to engage
at ramming speed, he quickly made his pleas to the gods
of the sea and in due fashion notched a feathered shaft
against the tightened gut and, eyeing the range towards
his enemy, instructed his arrow in its path, and arms
relaxed, his gaze accompanied its flight across the wind
until it hit its mark, pinning the master's hand to the helm
as he sat at the stern. No longer now could the master guide
his vessel with his deadened hand upon the steering oar.
And when the crew ran to his aid – they thought their ship
already captured – another shaft, shot from the self same bow
with similar success, threaded through the mass of sailors
to strike down Taurus as he strove to man the vacant helm.

A Cumaean vessel ploughed on: its captain's name was Corbulo
and it was manned by a chosen crew from the port of Stabiae[25].
The Lucrine Dione[26] was set on the aftercastle as tutelary deity,
but the ship engaged at too close quarters and, overwhelmed
by a storm of missiles, foundering in the midst of the open sea,
sank through the waves. Then Nereus choked the sailors' cries
with sea-froth and, as the mariners were dragged into the deep
and struggled in vain, their hands sank at last beneath the sea.
Emboldened by his rage Corbulo with a mighty leap crossed
the watery gap between the ships to clamber up the floors
of a tall tower, manufactured of wood and dragged alongside
by twin triremes, conjoined firmly by clamps wrought of iron
and which brandished from its summit a fiery torch of split pine.
From that high point he hurled down deadly pitch fed brands,
and the south wind fanned the fires upon the carven sterns.

The deadly flames spread in all directions and made their way
to fill the rowing banks; in panic the rowers of the upmost tier
abandoned their oars, but in this most dire of emergencies word
of the disaster's scale did not yet penetrate the lowest decks,
and the rapid conflagration, its brands dripping resinous flames,
crackled deep within the very hold, those flames all conquering.
And yet where still the Roman fire had not yet forced its way
and the smoke was less dense fierce Himilco still held the foe
at bay with a hail of stones and postponed the loss of his ship.
Here wretched Cydnus while fanning his pitch fed pine torch
in the air was wounded by a massive rock cast by Lycchaeus,
and slipping on the bloodied decks was hurled into the sea.
His flaming brand, extinguished, fouled the neighbouring air,

[25] A town close to Pompeii which suffered the same fate during the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 CE.
[26] Venus.

as it guttered in the radiant waves. Then savage Sabratha hurled
his speeding missile from the afterdeck of his beloved ship –
an image of the patron god of Libya was seated on the deck,
twin horned, and gazing over the sea from the ship in his care,
"Our Father," he cried, "Garamantian seer, grant, grant help
in our despair and ensure my shaft flies true against the foe!"
And as he spoke this prayer the quivering shaft flew true
and transfixed the head of Telon, a devotee of Neptune.

No less fiercely did they fight on, though even at death's door,
men whose flight had crowded them headlong into the final part
of the ship as yet untouched by fire, but that ineluctable blaze
like lightning consumed all in its way and embraced the ship,
its captive now, in an incandescent grip of triumphant flames.
First Himilco lowered himself down to the sea on a length
of rope whence Vulcan had not yet massed his hellish storm
and though sorely burned was ferried away by friendly oars.
A pitiable fate next robbed the desolate ship of her navigator,
Baton. That man by virtue of his skill could battle the cruel sea
and outsail the tempest, anticipate the North wind's intent,
foretell too what tomorrow's Southerly might hold in store
for mariners at sea. And nor could you, Little Bear[27], deceive
his watchful vigil, however much your course was masked.
And he in the face of total disaster said, "Ammon, receive
my offering of blood as you observe our iniquitous defeat."
He drove his sword into his heart and with his right hand
he cupped his blood to lavish it between the sacred horns.

Among the crew was one Daphnis who inherited his name
from an ancient source[28], an unlucky man to leave behind
his woods and rustic home to look upon the faithless sea.
The founder of his family gained much greater fame by far
by living a shepherd's life! The Muses of Sicily were deep
in love with Daphnis and his patron Apollo gave to him
Castalian pipes and bade the flocks to hasten cheery home
across the fields to Daphnis when he lay down on the grass
to play and sing, and the babbling brooks and streams stilled.
When Daphnis played upon his pipe of seven reeds
he charmed the trees, nor did the Siren pour forth
her usual songs at that same time across the seas:
the hounds of Scylla were silent, black Charybdis calmed.
The Cyclops heard the joyous song from his cave and was glad.
The flames consumed his descendant of that same sweet name.

See tough Ornytus swim on above the smoking thwarts
and devise for himself a lingering death upon the sea,
just so the son of Oïleus[29], when struck by Minerva's bolt

[27] The constellation Ursa Minor was employed by the Phoenicians as a guide for navigation.
[28] His ancestor was Daphnis, in mythology a Sicilian shepherd and the inventor of pastoral poetry.

of lightning tamed the swelling waves with arms on fire.
Sciron, a Marmarid, was impaled upon the armoured beak
of a ship as he breasted a wave: one half of his corpse
was submerged, one half above the waves, as it was borne
across the surface of the sea, a pitiful sight upon the ram.
On both sides the ships accelerated and an ensanguined spray
from the oars bedewed the faces of the rowers in their haste.
The Roman commander's flagship was propelled by six banks
of oars and its powerful crew drove it faster than the winds.
Lilaeus attempted swiftly to rein in its passage with his hands,
but his wrists were severed by the fearsome blow of an axe,
and the speeding ship flew on, his palms still fixed to its side.

A Sicilian ship bore a young Aeolian, his name Podaetus.
Although no more than eighteen or nineteen years of age
and not yet of an age to seek military fame, his fiery heart
was inspired by either a lust for war or some unlucky god,
as the youngster hefted a painted shield in his pallid arms,
and took delight in ploughing the sea in his lofty *Chimaera*.
He surged on now triumphant, outsailing the ships of Rome
and Carthage alike, his men superior with both oar and bow.
Already he had sunk the battleship *Nessus* beneath the waves!
How fatal, though, the lad's ill advised desire for military fame!
While in his folly he prayed to the gods to strip from Marcellus
his helmet's menacing plume and the Roman general's arms,
an answering enemy spear dealt him a ruinous wound.
A sad fate for such a one! For whether he strenuously cast
the shining discus to reach for the stars or hurled his javelin
beyond the clouds, or ran on flying feet that barely touched
the sand, or crossed an unprecedented stretch of ground
with one swift single leap, his endeavours all became him!
There was sufficient to become him in harmless competition,
sufficient praise: why, child, did you seek a loftier prize?
That fatal spear dispatched him sliding beneath the waves
and denied his shipwrecked bones a tomb in Syracuse.
Then the straits and Cyclopean rocks of Sicily wept for him,
and Cyane's spring and the waters of Anapus and Arethusa.

Elsewhere the *Perseus* - Tiberinus commanded this ship –
and the *Io*, in which the Carthaginian captain Crantor sailed,
joined battle. Clamps of iron were cast by both sides to join
the two ships and so, hove to and entangled they fought.
Nor was battle joined at long range with spear and flights
of arrows, but at close quarters with swords as if on land.
A Roman party then forced its way through where a breach
had been made by the initial butchery, but a giant of a man
exhorted his mates to burst the chains and fetters of iron
and prepared, his ship set free, to carry off the hostile force
of boarders to put a stretch of sea between them and theirs:

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[29] See Duff *ad loc.* "Ajax of Locris, the son of Oïleus, was punished by Pallas for ill-treatment (sic) of Cassandra; on his voyage home from Troy, she killed him by a flash of lightning."

this fellow was Polyphemus, raised in a cave on Etna,
a man enamoured of the fearsome traditions of his name.
A she-wolf had offered him as babe her teats, his great
bulk and height inspired awe, also his savage mind, the rage
imprinted on his face and deep Cyclopean lust for slaughter.
He freed the restraining chains by the power of his limbs
and sinking his oars in the sea would have forced his ship
to make way had not Laronius' swift and hastily cast spear
pinned him to the unforgiving thwart, as he strove to work
at the oar and did not cease as he looked death in the face.
Indeed his failing hand maintained the accustomed strokes,
and trailed the futile oar across the surface of the sea.

The Carthaginians, forced to retreat, packed the single space left
devoid of the foe, when the ship, overcome by the sudden shift
of weight, foundered in the invasive sea and then capsized.
The warriors' shields and helmets, their javelins, useless now
and tutelary deities were left afloat. One man deprived of steel
fights on with broken timber and arms himself to renew the fight
with the shipwrecked debris; another hastens to rob the ship
of its oars in his misguided fervour, and losing all judgement
he randomly hurls the rowers' fragmented benches at the enemy.
Nor steering oar nor prow is spared, but rather broken apart
to serve as weapons. Floating arms are retrieved from the sea.
The waves surge through the broken hull, then next are returned
to the deep, propelled by the ebb and flow of its own lively surge.
Some men there were who grasped the enemy in a tight embrace
and, lacking weapons themselves, themselves so drowned their foe
and shared their death. So those who survived the swirling seas
grew fierce of heart. In place of steel they weaponized the waves,
whose ensanguined vortices engulfed the mangled bloody dead.
Here victorious battle cries, there groans and death and flight,
the fracture of oars and cacophony of colliding brazen rams.
The ocean boils beneath the battle: exhausted by disaster
and quite out of his mind in desperation Himilco turned tail
in flight and set course in a paltry craft for the shores of Africa.

At last the Greek and Carthaginian forces abandoned the sea,
while their captured ships were chained and towed away
in lengthy formation. Other vessels illuminated by the flames
were still at sea, which glowed with light in its profundity,
and the deep now shimmered with quivering reflections.
Cyane, familiar in those seas, was aflame and winged *Siren*.
The *Europa* too, whose namesake Jupiter rode disguised
as a snow white bull and grasped one horn to cross the sea;
and the dewy *Nereid*, her hair adrift, who drove the arch-
backed dolphin across the waves with dripping reins.
The seafaring *Python* also burned and horn-crowned *Ammon*,
and the vessel that bore the likeness of Tyrian Dido,
propelled she was across the waves by six banks of oars,
but the *Anapus* was towed by chains to familiar shores

as was the *Pegasus* who bore his Gorgon wings to the sky.
Also taken were the ship that carried the likeness of *Libya*
and the *Triton* and *Etna*, named for the high volcanic peak,
Enceladus' pyre, and the *Sidon*, named for Cadmus' city.

Through this victory the Romans might have at once breached
the fearful walls and introduced their eagles to the holy shrines,
had not now of a sudden an evil plague and hostile pestilence,
a product of the gods' divine ill will and the sea's foul contagion
under an infected sky deprived the wretched Romans of their joy.
The bright haired Titan's rays filled the air with feverish heat
and the waters of Cyane's now stagnant and wide spread marsh
with the deadly Stygian stench of hellish Cocytus' foul streams,
and polluted the autumn's kindly season and its joyful gifts,
consuming them all with the rapid bursts of the lightning's fire.
The sky was dark and thickly filled with clouds of smoke;
the earth grew parched, its surface destroyed by the heat,
providing neither food nor sheltering shade for the sick.
Dark mists exhaled from the earth to blacken the sky to pitch.
The dogs first felt the malaise, then the birds' wings failed
and they fell, plummeting down from the sombre clouds.
Next forest beasts succumbed and then the hellish plague
spread further, depopulating the military camps of men.
The tongue grew parched, and a gut wrenching cold sweat
poured over the shivering body, while the gullet locked,
refusing to swallow the prescribed and nourishing food.
A dry cough shook the lungs and the patient's hot breath
was exhaled in panting gasps between the fevered lips.
The eyes, scarce able to bear the weight of light itself,
sank next an angular nose, a mixture of blood and snot
was spewed and the skin now clad emaciated bony limbs.
Such grief for a warrior famed for noted warlike deeds
to be seized by sluggish disease! Proud trophies won
by men in many a battle were cast on the funeral pyre.
Medicaments succumbed to the plague. Dead mens'
remains were gathered to rise in a massive heap of ash.
Abandoned and unburied corpses also lay everywhere
about, their pestiferous limbs inspiring infectious dread.
The hellish plague growing fat upon its prey next slithered
inside the walls of Syracuse, shaking them with equal grief,
and darkly brought similar pain to the African camp.
On both sides the destructive anger of the gods now fell
indiscriminate and the same visage of death stalked all.

However, while Marcellus survived, no cruel force of fate
could break his men and that individual's safety midst
the carnage eased their distress. And so when harsh Sirius,
the dog star, first repressed his pestilential temperatures,
and the greedy diseases reduced their appetite for death,
just as when the southerly fades and the seas grow calm
the fisherman takes his boat and attempts the open sea,

so Marcellus finally armed his troops who had survived
the plague's assault and then ritually purified their ranks.
All eagerness they surround the eagles and breathe relief
on hearing the trumpets' blast. They march upon the foe!
Gods willing it is their choice to fall by the sword n war.
They pity the shameful lot of their comrade in arms
who like some cattle beast breathed his last inglorious gasp
on his soiled barrack bunk. They snatch a backward glance
at the tombs and inglorious graves, their preference to die
unburied, not unmanned by disease. Marcellus first rushed
the lofty standards against the walls. Their helmets concealed
the haggard faces drawn thin in convalescence and also hid
their sickly complexions which might encourage the enemy.
They pour a charging company across the battered city walls,
attacking in close order and in that single assault and entry
many ramparts and impregnable fortifications were seized.

Throughout the whole wide world around which Titan drives
his chariot was there a city then to rival Sicilian Syracuse?
So many temples of the gods, so many ports within the walls,
and in addition public squares and pillar supported theatres,
rock moles combatting the sea and endless terraces of proud
homes, spacious enough to rival any palatial rural property.
What of the sacred training grounds devoted to athletic youth,
their generous dimensions enclosed by lengthy colonnades?
The lofty buildings resplendent with the beaks of captured ships?
And arms as trophies for the gods, arms taken from Athenians[30],
or brought home to Syracuse from victories achieved in Africa[31]?
For here was a building decorated with the trophies of Agathocles,
here the peaceful wealth of Hiero[32]displayed, and the history
of Syracuse sanctified by his artistic works. For the painter's art
was never more glorious than at that time. They felt no need
to bring in Corinthian bronzes. Their tapestries matched the glow
of yellow gold, their weave producing breathing images of men
to rival the shuttle-work of Babylon, or of Tyre that takes joy
in the murex dye or the intricate needlework skills of Attalus'
embroideries in Persia, or work crafted on the looms of Egypt.
Here too were goblets of radiant silverwork, made the more
desirable by varied inserts of gems, and images of the gods,
their living presence preserved by art, and nacreous treasures[33]
dredged from the Red Sea's depth and Chinese silks reaped
from trees by women's hands. Such the city and spoils of war
the Roman general had acquired, and now from the battlements
on high he gazed upon a city terrified by the trumpets' blast,

[30] This refers to the ill-fated Athenian expedition against Syracuse in the years 415-413 BCE during the Peloponnesian War.
[31] See Duff, *ad loc.* "Agathocles, who died at an uncertain age in 289 B.C., rose from a private and obscure station to be tyrant of Syracuse and king of Sicily. He defeated the Carthaginians in many great battles in Africa."
[32] As a result of the mercantile policies of Hiero the Second (c. 306-215 BCE) and his accommodations with Rome Syracuse became wealthy and magnificent.
[33] Pearls.

whose fate depended on his nod, whether the royal walls remained
upright, or tomorrow's dawning sun should look on them no more.
He groaned at his excess of power, was shocked that such a choice
was his. And so he swiftly reined in the savagery of his soldiery,
gave orders that the city stand unscathed, allowing its shrines
and temples to house and nurture the gods of old. So clemency
prevailed over the lust for plunder and Victoria was content
to celebrate the triumph with her wings unspotted by gore.
However, Archimedes, famed defender of his Syracuse, inspired
Marcellus' tears of grief, when ruinous death snatched him away
when, calm of mind, he pondered diagrams scratched in the sand.

The rest of the people though defeated vied in their glad relief
with the victors and rejoiced. Marcellus himself rivalled the gods
in clemency and in preserving the city founded it a second time.
Therefore Syracuse still stands and will so remain for centuries,
a glorious trophy, a memorial of the mores of our generals past.

The peoples of the world would be blessed if our Roman peace
might leave their cities unplundered as was the way in antiquity!
Indeed, had not the concern of that man who brought peace to all
the world, restrained the unbridled lust for universal spoliation,
rapine and avarice would have stripped bare both land and sea.

Punica: Book 15

Silius Italicus

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Punica Bk. 15

The Senate debate the appointment of commanding officer in Sicily. Scipio is eager to go but dissuaded by his relatives (1-17). *Scipio is visited by both Virtue and Pleasure in a reprise of the choice of Hercules* (18-128). *Won over by Virtue he is granted the command with good omens* (129-151). *His armada lands at Taracco* (152-179). *His father's ghost urges him to capture New Carthage which he does* (180-250). *After victory he sacrifices to the gods and rewards his troops, distributing the spoils. An act of chivalry to a Spanish maiden wins him praise from Laelius* (251-285). *The war against Philip of Macedon* (286-319). *Fabius takes Tarentum* (320-333). *Hannibal defeats the consuls Marcellus and Crispinus and the former is killed* (334-398). *Scipio puts Hasdrubal to flight in Spain. Praise of Laelius* (399-492). *Hasdrubal joins his brother in Italy* (493-514). *Panic in Rome where the consul, C. Claudius Nero is advised in a dream to march north against Hasdrubal* (515-559). *Nero joins forces with M. Livius his fellow consul* (560-600). *The battle of Metaurus* (601-807). *Nero returns to Lucania and displays Hasdrubal's head on a pike to Hannibal* (807-823).

New troubles now began to harass the Senators in Rome:
who should undertake the war in Spain and boost the morale
of the careworn tribes? Two Scipios lay dead at the hands
of proud Hannibal's men, two brothers of martial character[1].
They feared that Spain would slip back under Carthaginian rule,
while they dreaded the risk of fresh hostilities close to home.
The fearful body of senators cast about in sorrow for a cure
to sustain the tottering body politic and prayed to the gods
for a leader bold enough to command demoralized troops.

An adolescent Scipio wished to placate both his father's spirit
and his uncle's, but his kinfolk feared for his youth and, shocked
by recent grievous losses, sought to dissuade the young man.
If he wished to go to that unlucky land he must needs wage war
amidst the tombstones of his kin with a foe that had routed both
their arms and stratagems, a victor whose morale burned bright.
Nor was it straightforward to load warfare's burdensome load
on youthful shoulders, of command upon such inexperience.

The youth mulled over these concerns in his heart while he sat
in the green shade of a distant bay tree that grew on his estate,
when suddenly two winged figures descended to land on his right
and his left, larger by no small measure than any human form:
here was Virtus[2] and there was Virtus' mortal enemy, Voluptas[3],
from whose head there breathed an exotic Persian perfumery,
a head resplendent with flowing locks of ambrosial hair, her gown
an embroidered masterpiece, in tawny gold and woven Tyrian hues.

[1] These men were Scipio Africanus; father and uncle: see Bk. 14. 671ff.

[2] The all encompassing term for Roman virtue and manliness, exemplified by Aeneas in Vergil's *Aeneid.*

[3] Here Silius adapts to his epic purpose the sophist Prodicus' story of "The Choice of Herakles" which is preserved in the *Memorabilia*, 2.1ff, of Xenophon and was also exploited by the Roman Stoics.

A pin revealed her glorious brow, beneath which her wanton eyes
flashed forth a coruscating and shifting gaze of languid sexuality.
The other's quality was at odds: her hair, unkempt upon her brow,
grew free from fashion's wiles. Her gaze was steady, her visage
and gait like that of a man, endowing her a cheerful diffidence,
and her snowy woven robe glowed white upon her shoulders tall.

Voluptas addressed him first, was confident in her promises,
"What madness is this, unfitting too, my son, to waste the bloom
of youth on war? Have Cannae and Trasimene, more full of dread
than the Stygian marsh, and the Po all fled your consciousness?
How long and to what end will you challenge fate in waging war?
Do you prepare to test too the realms of Spain's Atlantic shores
and the city of Carthage? I advise you to cease confronting risks
and placing your life in harm's way in the stormy clash of arms!
Unless you shun her sacraments, harsh Virtus will order you
to launch yourself into the battle's moil and conflagration dire.
All wasteful she dispatched your father and uncle, Paulus too
and the Decii[4], down to the darkling Stygian streams of Erebus,
inscribed an epitaph and their famous names on the tombs above
their ashes, honouring ghosts quite unaware of their own deeds.
If, though, you follow me as my companion, my son, then your
appointed span of life will run no more along a rugged path.
The trumpet's blast will never more disrupt your troubled dreams;
you will not experience the Arctic chill, nor yet the blazing heat
of Cancer's stars, nor tables fashioned from the clods of blood
stained grass. Dire thirst shall not be yours nor choking dust
inhaled behind your helmet nor daily labours filled with fear.
Your days will rather run on cheerfully, your hours serene,
your expectations that of an easeful life and a long old age.
What joyful pursuits the god himself has granted to benefit
mankind, the goodly delights bestowed by a bounteous hand!
The untroubled life of the god is a model for mortal kind,
as unperturbed in mind he lives his life of easeful leisure[5].
I am the deity who joined Venus with Anchises on the banks
of Simois, from whose union was born the founder of your race[6].
I am the deity who often shifted the shape of Jupiter, father of gods
and men, now to a bird and now to a bull with dreadful horns.
Now lend me your ears! The life of mortals runs away on us,
and we are fated to live only once. The hours flee and the stream
of Tartarus seizes and carries our shades away in its flood, forbids
we take with us any source of delight. At the fading of the light
all men grieve too late they have abandoned my hours of delight."

When she fell silent and had brought an end to her address,

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[4] See Duff's notes *ad loc.* "For the death of Paulus see x. 232 foll." and "P. Decimus Mus gave up his life to save the Roman army in battle against the Latins, 340 B.C. ; his son, of the same name, repeated the act of heroism in the battle of Sentinum against the Samnites, 295 B.C."

[5] Here Silius articulates the Epicurean ideal of human and divine life formerly expressed by Lucretius in his *De Rerum Natura.*

[6] Aeneas.

then Virtus, " Why do you entice this young man in the bloom
of life," she said, " into false paths that lead only to obscurity,
a youth endowed with the heavenly gift of reason and seeds
of intelligence divine? As the gods that dwell in heaven excel
over mortal men, by so much do mortals themselves outshine
all other types of animal. Indeed Nature has assigned mankind
as minor deities on earth, but by a rigid rule degenerate souls
she has condemned to dwell in Avernus' gloomy shade,
while heaven's gates lay open for those who have kept safe
the godly seeds of intelligence within. Why speak of Hercules
who tamed all beasts? Or of Bacchus whose chariot on his return
in triumph from the Orient, both China and India overwhelmed,
was drawn through the towns by tigers from the Caucasus?
Why mention the twins that Leda bore[7], whose names in appeal
are on the lips of sailors in distress, or your Roman Romulus?
Do you not see how the deity has lifted the heads of mankind
to face the stars, has lifted heavenward their countenance,
whereas the beasts of the fields and the birds of the air he has
aligned their bellies along the ground, inactive and obscene?
A man is born for glory, if only he can exploit the gifts divine,
and, achieving fame among men, be glad! Come, look to me
a moment – my search will not be long – once Rome was not
a match for threatening Fidena, was content to grow as a home
for vagabonds and rise above that state by toil! Consider too
the cities that flourished far and wide brought low by luxury.
Indeed neither the rage of the gods nor an enemy's attacks
are as fatal as Voluptas' sole assault on a mind made sick.
Her foul companions are Drunkenness and Luxury, Disgrace
ever hovers about her person on black and noisome wings.
Praise, Honour and Glory with a cheerful face accompany me,
and Seemliness and Victory with snowy wings a match for mine.
Triumph, laurel bound uplifts my soul at the last to the stars.
My house is chaste and my sacred home stands on a lofty hill,
and access there is achieved by a steep and rock strewn path.
Harsh labours must be yours to pursue from the start – it is not
my way to bear false witness: should you wish to enter there
you must extend yourself and spurn the wealth which likewise
false Fortune can give and take away. Exalted soon from on high
you will discern below the human race. What lays in wait for you
is contrary now to the promises made by seductive Voluptas.
Stretched out on a harsh mattress of straw you will experience
insomniac nights beneath the stars, tame cold and hunger both.
At once a champion of Justice in everything you undertake,
you believe that the gods will witness all that you do.
And whenever threats to the fatherland and its affairs
demand, you first will take up arms, be first to launch against
the enemy's walls. Nor steel nor gold shall conquer your intent.
No raiment stained with Tyrian purple dyes shall be my gift,
nor fragrant scents of cardamom, unbecoming a Roman man.

[7] Castor and Pollux.

My gift will be your dominion over the foe who now torments
Rome's rule with bloody war, your right to set the proud laurel
upon the lap of Jupiter[8], marking the rout of Carthaginian arms."

On making such a heartfelt and sacred prophecy Virtus won
her contest and Scipio's approval, who took delight in her words,
his face enraptured. Voluptas though waxed indignant, did not
restrain her words, " I will not further delay the two of you!"
she exclaimed. " My time, my time will come some future day,
when biddable Rome will subject herself to my dominion
in a season of great strife and I alone shall have honour's prize."
Then tossing her head she soared aloft to the darkling clouds.

Then Scipio filled with virtuous advice[9] devised great plans
in his heart and grew hot with desire for his appointed task.
Though no one wanted fearful war, Scipio climbed the high
Rostrum and sought the burdensome and fraught command.
The citizens were all enthused: some saw his father's face,
while some thought his uncle's grim visage was rejuvenate.
And so they were encouraged, but a silent dread of the risks
involved seized their beating hearts as anxiously they gauge
the costs of war and Scipio's nervous friends fret about his age[10].

The commons were in muttered debate on these confusing affairs,
when, behold! A snake all glittering with golden scales was seen
to be carried across the sky amidst the clouds and irradiate
the heavens above, as it ploughed its incandescent trail of fire,
course set for the western shores where Atlas sustains the sky,
itself reverberant. For twice and thrice lord Jupiter did add
his thunder to the portent, and suddenly his lightning strikes
at large and far and wide and he makes the earth itself to quake.
Then indeed there was a call to arms and Romans knelt to hail
the portent: and Scipio should now clearly go whither the gods
had shown the way, where his father's avatar revealed the path.

Men gathered themselves in rivalry to join in his enterprise,
to help in the war and demanded to share with him his harsh
toils. Being with him in the battles to come was praise enough.
A new fleet then was launched into the grey blue of the sea.
The hearts and minds of Italy accompanied him to Spain.
Just as when the North West wind wages war on the seas
to flood Corinth's lofty Isthmus with overarching waves
and with foaming rollers rushes upon the echoing rocks
to mix the Ionian and Aegean seas, just so Scipio stood tall
upon the afterdeck and resplendent in arms and prayed,

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[8] Silius means the seated statue of Jupiter in the temple on the Capitol in Rome.
[9] Scipio has been won over by Virtus' appeal to the Stoic ethics that are consonant with traditional aristocratic Roman views.
[10] Scipio was twenty four years old and a military tribune, a relatively junior officer. However, in 211 BCE he was elected by the Assembly to the office of proconsul, in command of an army, an unprecedented promotion and anticipatory of the career later of Pompeius Magnus.

"Lord Neptune of the trident, across whose deeps we now
set out to cross, grant, father, passage safe, if my cause is just,
and do not decline to help me in this my hardy enterprise.
I bring a just war across your sea!" At once a gentle breeze
arose to fill their sails and drive them on with kindly breath.
And now the nimble ships pass by the shores of Italy, where
sound Etruscan seas, and in full sail they make their way
along Ligurian shores[11]. From here upon the ocean's swell
they descry the very earth irrupt amongst the stars above –
it is the towering Alps! Next Massilia, founded by the Greeks
hoves into view: a city girt by populations of prideful tribes,
and, though horrified by their neighbours' barbarous rites,
they still maintain the culture and character of their home
of old, a colony of Phocis found midst warlike communities.
The Roman general next traced the tortuous coastal bays
until there appeared a lofty range of hills topped by trees,
where Pyrenean forests fled up to the clouds above.
Next Emporiae, another ancient colony founded by folk
from Greece, and Tarraco too, hospitable to Bacchus' vine.
And here they rode at anchor. The ships came to rest, secure
in harbour, the trials and terrors of their passage forgotten.

A most peaceful night brought sleep as profound as death
to Scipio, before whose face appeared an image of his sire,
which spoke words of advice to the troubled young man,
" Son, sometime saviour of your sire, and a source of pride
and joy even after my death, you must lay waste this land,
this baleful source of wars, must tame with mindful courage
these generals of Africa, these men by slaughter made proud,
who presently keep all their forces in three separate camps.
If you should wish to join battle and their three forces unite,
all summoned hither and yon, who then could withstand
the threefold assault of their host? Shun such a dubious task,
but actively bestir yourself and a choose a better plan!
There is a city settled here and founded by Teucer long ago,
New Carthage by name, and inhabited too by Carthaginians.
And like its namesake in Libya this city is a famous capital
in Spain: no other city can rival it in its hoard of gold,
in its port or lofty citadel, in its gifts of rich and fertile land,
in its energy and versatile skills in manufacturing arms.
Invest this city, when their leaders are looking elsewhere,
my son. No battle else will win such treasure and such fame."

His father's shade instructed him so and came closer to give
further advice, when sleep and the dream abandoned Scipio,
who rose and prayed to the gods who dwelt in the groves
of hell and a suppliant addressed ancestral shades by name,
"Be leaders in this war and take me to this wondrous city;
I shall avenge you all and, resplendent in the purple of Tyre,

[11] The south of France n modern parlance.

when Spain is defeated, shall make offerings at your graves,
found games and sacred competition to honour your tombs."
He began his advance and picked up speed, forced march
his troops double time and drove them hard across the plain.
Just so, when the champion Olympic horse leaps headlong
from the starting gate, not only outstripping his rivals, but
also, amazing to tell, his mates in the team, so his chariot
seems to fly through the air, far faster than the eye can see!

By now the sun's light rising on the seventh dawn revealed
gradatim the citadels of New Carthage growing ever closer,
the towers seeming ever taller as the Roman army neared.
And then, on the hour appointed by his general for the fleet
to sail in from sea, Laelius brought his ships under the walls,
so disposing them in line to blockade the city from the rear.
The city had been well endowed, favoured with Nature's gifts -
its defensive walls loomed high above the surrounding sea.
A small island blocks off the narrow entrances to the bay,
where the rising sun scatters his dawning light on the land,
but, where he observes Apollo's evening chariot descend,
he has propelled the sluggish waters across a barren marsh,
which the movement of the tides makes ebb and flow in turn.
The city itself is set high on a ridge and faces the chilly north,
a ridge which projects out into the sea spread out far below
and so the everlasting tides defend its impregnable walls.

The Romans sought boldly to scale this formidable ridge,
as if carrying their victorious eagles across a level plain.
In charge of the defences was Aris. He exploited the steep
and narrow terrain and had already fortified the citadel.
The terrain itself assisted him. From their superior height
his men had small difficulty in hurling their precarious foes
headlong, and maimed as they fell many breathed their last.
However, when the tides in turn changed and the rapid flow
of the waters reversed itself and rushed back to the sea,
then where before tall ships had just ploughed the waves,
the sea nymphs granted safe passage to soldiers on foot:
from this direction, unsuspected, Scipio silently approached
and at once advanced his disembarked men from the ships,
who swiftly waded to the city walls. They marched at speed
to take the city from the rear, where Aris, putting his trust
in the sea, had left the city undefended and ungarrisoned.
Then prostrate on the ground the Carthaginian in defeat,
poor wretch, gave his neck to the chains, his town to slavery.
At dawn the rising sun looked down on a city under siege
and witnessed the fall of that same city, taken well before
he had steered his chariot down to kiss the western sea.

Approaching dawn drove dark shadows from the earth:
at first they set up altars and a massive bull was sacrificed,
an offering both to Neptune and to Jupiter, the Thunderer.

Then merit was rewarded with gifts, and courage won
its prizes for blood spilt: one man's chest shone with medals,
another glowed with decorations for leading the assault,
a third encircled his warlike neck with a torque of gold.
And Laelius, famed above all for his exploits and lineage,
was awarded thirty cattle beasts, a noble title for his victory
at sea and the arms recent stripped from the Carthaginian
commander. Each man received spears and battle colours
in line with his deserts and a share of the spoils of war.

When the praises of men and gods were duly completed,
the captured wealth was reviewed and the booty divided:
this gold for the senators, these talents to service the war,
some went to allied kings and especially the holy temples
of the gods, the rest to the men at arms for their noble work.
The ruler of one of the Spanish tribes was sent for by Scipio.
This man's betrothed was the object of his heartfelt love,
a woman famed for her beauty whom Scipio, triumphant,
gladly returned, virginity unsullied, to her joyful spouse.
Then free from carping care they set up tables on the shore
nearby to celebrate a glorious feast in honour of the victory.
And Laelius spoke, " My glorious leader, revered and chaste!
All hail your glorious heart! Your nobility and fame outdoes
the greatest heroes and your courage is celebrated in song!
The king of Mycenae who launched a thousand ships to sea,
the Thessalian, who linked his troops with the men of Argos,
were seduced by a woman's love to betray their sacred oath,
and each of the tents that were pitched on the plain of Troy
enjoyed its share of captured comfort girls, but you alone kept
a barbarian maid more safe than Apollo's Trojan Cassandra."
And so they exchanged varied conversations and talk until
dark Night, enveloping all with the blackness of her cloak,
urged on her dusky team and persuaded all to take their rest.

Meanwhile Aetolia's land, invaded by a force from Macedon
and under attack by its fleet, was in a fever pitch of anxiety.
Their neighbor Acarnania joined forces with their enemy.
The cause of this new eventuality was an alliance between
King Philip the Fifth and Carthage against the forces of Rome[12].
This man could boast a noble line, deriving from an ancient monarchy,
and he swelled with pride in Aeacus' sceptre and his ancestor, Achilles.
He terrified the Epirot port of Oricon, launching a night attack;
wherever the people of Taulus had chosen to settle the Illyrian coast
in small, unfortified and modest villages, not worthy of a name,
he venomously attacked. He launched seaborne assaults upon
the rural countryside of the Phaeacians and the men of Thesprotia,
swept through Epirus' lands in a totally vain and futile campaign.
He next revealed his force's standards on the coast of Anactorium,
and filled the bays of Ambracia and the gulf of Olpae with rapid war.

[12] See Duff's note *ad loc.* "Philip V., of Macedon, an ally of Carthage since 215 B.C. took sides with the Acarnanians against the Aetolians, who were Roman allies."

His galleys' oars bestirred the fervid waters of Leucate, and he saw
as he sailed by at speed the temple of Phoebus Apollo at Actium.
Nor did he leave unvisited the ports of Ithaca, domain of Laërtes,
nor far off Samē and the crags of Cephallenia that re-echo the sea's
white foam and sounding surf, nor the rock strewn fields of Neritus.
Philip took special delight in visiting the Peloponnese and the towns
of Achaia and the cities of Oeneus, yes - Calydon, victim of Diana's ire,
which was once the home of the Curetes, and he promised the men
of Greece his alliance in arms against the forces of Rome and Italy.
He next passed Corinth and Patrae and the royal city of Pleuron,
Parnassus' twin peaks and Delphi's oracular cliffs of Phoebus Apollo.
The demands of war summoned him back to his homeland too,
when a Macedonian tribe of the Orestae endangered his realm,
or an hostile force of the Dolopes inundated his countryside.
However, he still stubbornly pursued his vainglorious ambitions,
and brought the shadow of war to all the coastal towns of Greece.
Disempowered at last by both land and by sea, he ceased to put
his hopes in the men of Carthage and petitioned a pact with Rome,
and grudgingly accepted strict limits be placed on his regal sway[13].

And at that same time the fate of Spartan Tarentum increased
the wealth and fame of Rome. For at last that perfidious state
was defeated by the venerable Fabius, the final victory in arms
of that canny general, and here too his cunning achieved a safe
success, since the walls were breached without a loss of blood.
For when he heard that the Carthaginian commander burned
with love for a certain woman, Fabius, to whose discreet virtue
a secret stratagem appealed, required the inamorata's brother,
a man who served in the Roman camp, to visit his sister to win
her woman's heart, promising lavish gifts, if the Carthaginian
commander agreed to throw open the city's gates, and when
the Carthaginian succumbed to her entreaties, Fabius encircled
the open city with his force and under cover of night
he entered the city's gates with not a single guard in place.

Yet any man might believe that the sun had turned his chariot's
steeds back in their tracks[14], when at that same time he learned
that Marcellus had died in a skirmish with Carthaginian horse.

That giant of a man, whose heart was the home of fiery Mars,
that never trembled in the face of confronting perils –
his huge and tragic fall will serve to make Hannibal's glory shine,
and now the scourge of Carthage lies prostrate upon the field!
If only the gods had granted him a mere modicum more of life,
he might have robbed young Scipio of the fame of ending the war.

Now Mars had taken residence in the fields of Daunus[15]. A hill

[13] See again Duff's note *ad loc.* "In 197 B.C. Philip was completely defeated by the Romans at Cynoscephalae, a range of hills in Thessaly, and had to accept harsh conditions of peace."
[14] An omen announcing a tragedy of great moment.
[15] Apulia.

divided the Carthaginian camp from that of the Roman force.
Crispinus was commander with Marcellus, sharing both cares
and honours, as in concert they conducted the business of war.
Marcellus spoke to him, " I have a mind to scrutinize the woods
hard by, placing troops on that high ground that lies between us,
in case the Carthaginian should seize it secretly before we do,
and if it suits, Crispinus, I would have you too take part in this
endeavour. Battle plans are never lacking when two minds join."
When this stratagem was set, they eagerly aroused themselves
to mount at once their steeds. Marcellus, when he saw his son
assuming his armour and taking delight in the prospect of war,
declared, " Your lust for the battle outstrips your father's zeal!
May your precocious labours prosper! When I saw you watch
the fighting and war in Syracuse - too young still to participate
yourself – I saw my very own grim features truly reproduced!
My pride, my joy, come, come stand close by your father's side,
and learn to test this new business of war with a master's help."
He then embraced the young man's neck and briefly prayed,
"Ensure, O Jupiter, supreme, I make you rich with booty won,
carried off from Hannibal's horde on this boy's back!" No more
was said before Jupiter poured a bloody rain from pristine skies,
which besmirched their ill fated arms with threatening drops.
Marcellus' words were scarcely finished when they penetrated
the narrowing gullet of that deadly hill, when a speeding troop
of Numidian horse attacked with javelins, a storm-like cloud
of cavalry, pouring forth a hail of weaponry from their covert
ambuscade. When brave Marcellus was surrounded, he saw
no reason more to owe the gods a debt[16], and desired to take
to the shades the fame of a noble death. He rose now higher
upon his horse to hurl the farther his spear, while now hand
to hand he joined to close quarter, duelling with his sword.
Perhaps he might have even survived these perilous straits,
had not his son taken a direct hit from a javelin in the chest.
The father's hands grew palsied and his grip relaxed in grief
and his unfortunate weapons slipped and fell from his hands.
A lance took him in the front to pierce his unprotected heart,
so he slipped and he fell and his chin cut a swathe in the grass.

But when in the hurly burley of that fearsome fight Hannibal
descried the weapon that was buried deep in Marcellus' chest,
he gave a mighty shout, "Cease, Carthage, now from any fear
of Roman domination! That deadly name, the bulwark of Rome,
has been laid low, but that great warrior so like to me must not
descend to join the shades without appropriate honours due.
Great virtue has no truck with jealousy!" At once a lofty altar
to honour the noble dead was erected that reached to the sky.
They brought great oaks from the woods. One might believe
an African general had died. Incense was brought and offerings
of meat, the consul's fasces and shield in the funeral procession.

[16] Betrayed by Jupiter and on the point of death he felt no more any debts other than to his own reputation.

The man himself applied the torch and said, " We have won
eternal glory by robbing Rome of Marcellus! Perhaps at length
the men of Italy will choose to down their arms. Men grant
the rites that are due to this proud spirit and offer his remains
the final tribute. I would never deny you this, O city of Rome!"
The second consul shared the self same heavy fate as Marcellus.
His horse carried him back to camp, stricken with fatal wounds.

Such things took place in Italy, but events on the battle fields
of Spain were vastly different. All the neighbouring tribes
had been shocked by the sudden and speedy fall of the city
of new Carthage. Their generals harboured but one single hope:
they must unite their forces. For young Scipio had commenced
his command with great good fortune, as if he bore in battle
the thunderbolts of his father Jupiter[17]. And furthermore
within a single day he had taken this citadel despite its strong
hill-top location and steep approach, compiled a mass of enemy
dead, while warlike Hannibal had spent a year in this land
reducing Saguntum, a city less wealthy and short on soldiery.

The nearest Carthaginian was Hasdrubal, encamped in rock
strewn wooded hills and basking in his brother's glorious
achievements. His strength was a mixed force of Cantabrians,
rebellious Africans and Asturians, swifter than nimble Moors.
The great awe that Hasdrubal enjoyed in the lands of Spain
matched equally the dire dread earned by Hannibal in Italy.
By chance the solemn anniversary day had returned on which
men had first established the foundations of lofty Carthage,
the beginnings of a great new city made with humble huts.
And Hasdrubal now recalled with joy the origins of his race,
celebrating the festival, wreathing his standards with blooms
to placate the gods. A splendid cloak, his brother's gift, hung
from his shoulders, which Hieronymus of Syracuse had sent
to Hannibal with other gifts as a pledge of the close alliance
between them, an heirloom worn by the tyrant kings of Sicily.
An eagle, poised in flight in the weave, was carrying a young
boy[18] skyward to Jupiter's heavenly halls on pinions of gold.
Adjacent the needle had imitated in the purple cloth a great
cave, home of the Cyclopes. Reclining here was Polyphemus,
inhaling bleeding corpses through death-dealing jaws.
Around him lay splintered bones hawked out from his lips.
The beast himself extended his hand to demand a cup of wine
from Ulysses, belching forth a mix of wine and undiluted gore.

Distinctive in this masterpiece of Sicilian weaving work
next the altars of turf, Hasdrubal prayed for god's grace:
But see! In the midst of all a mounted messenger brought
news – hostile forces were on the advance towards them.
Confusion then reigned and the rites to honour the gods

[17] The story was that Jupiter had fathered Scipio while in the form of a snake, see Bk. 13. 643ff.
[18] The child is Ganymede snatched away to act as Jupiter's cup-bearer and catamite.

interrupted. Men abandoned the sacred altars and ritual…
They took refuge in camp and when Aurora[19], full of dew,
sent her thin light from the sky, they quick-marched to war.
Sabura the brave was hit by young Scipio's whistling spear:
both battle lines' hearts were stirred by the omens they saw.
The Roman general exclaimed, " Your first sacrifice is laid
low, dead on the field, my sacred ghosts! So, come, my men -
attack and wreak carnage! Charge as once you were wont
when your dead generals lived[20]." And while he still spoke,
they began. And Laenas cut down Myconus, Latinus slew Cirta
and Maro Thysdrus, Catalina slew the incestuous Nealces
his sister's mate in bed. Kartalo, ruler of the Libyan sands,
was felled and died at the hands of savage Nasidius.
And the land of Spain was terrified on seeing you, Laelius,
enraged beyond belief in the midst of the Carthaginians,
great glory of the Roman race, to whom felicitous Nature
had granted all gifts, not one of the gods in disagreement.
He spoke in the forum and when his eloquence was displayed,
he matched the mellifluous tones of Nestor, ancient king of Pylos.
When senators were in doubt and demanded the voice
of leadership, Laelius directed their hearts as if spellbound.
Yet this same man, when the trumpet's dour note did sound
in men's ears on the battlefield, charged into the fray and line
of battle with such great fervour, as if solely born for Mars.
All facets of his life demanded he win delightful success.
Now Galla he cast down, a man involved in the war by means
of a trick: his mother had saved him from the sacrificial fires
of Carthage[21] by substituting another child in his proper place,
but no delight can endure when won by deceiving the gods.
He next dispatched to the shades Alabis, Murrus and Draces,
the last begging for life at the last with womanish shrieks,
but Laelius' sword severed his neck in the midst of his pleas
and appeals: his babbling continued his head cut off.

The Libyan general was not seized with a similar lust for war,
but sought refuge midst the wooded hills and trackless rocks,
nor did the slaughter of his troops and dreadful losses move
Hasdrubal at all. In his flight he looked to the Alps and Italy,
the major prizes of escape. A password sent the secret dispatch:
abandon the fight and retreat to the woods and the hills.
All who escaped should disperse and seek the topmost peaks
of the Pyrenees. Hasdrubal took the lead, abandoning his fine
armour and regalia and took as his as disguise a Spanish shield.
He left for the hills and chose to abandon his troops to scatter
abroad. The Roman soldiers carried their victorious colours
into the deserted African camp. No city captured ever before
delivered such plunder which, as the Carthaginian general

[19] The goddess of the dawn.
[20] Scipio's father and uncle.
[21] See Bk. 4. 765 ff.

had foreseen, delayed the Roman troops in their lust for blood.
Just so the beaver when caught in the river's eddying flood
bites off the part from its groin[22]the cause of its immediate risk,
and swims far away as its foes concentrate, intent on their prize.
The Carthaginians swiftly hid themselves in the sylvan gloom,
and placed their trust in the rock strewn woods, while Scipio
seeks greater battles still and an enemy more certain to crush.
They fixed up a shield on a Pyrenean peak – its legend read,
"Hasdrubal's shield is offered to Mars by his conqueror Scipio!"

Meanwhile Hasdrubal himself, all terrors set aside, had crossed
the Pyrenees and was arming the tribes in the realm of Bebryx,
handing out lavish payments and all too willing to spend on war
the treasures war had won for him. Great inducements of gold
and silver were sent on ahead to enhance the warlike appetite
of the tribes, wealth won from mining far distant metallic ores.
And so the mercenary urge soon filled Hasdrubal's new camps
with eager troops, some delighting in the waters of the Rhone,
others through whose land the sluggish, serpentine Arar crept.
And now as winter was banished the year began to grow mild.
Then Hasdrubal made his way quickly through the Celtic lands,
was amazed by the conquered Alps with their steepling routes,
and there he searched for any traces of the spoor of Hercules,
comparing his brother's Alpine crossing with his heroic feats.

When he reached the summit and rested in Hannibal's camp,
he declared, " What battlements, Rome, what city walls can you
raise higher than these that can still stand when my brother has
conquered them? I pray that he might be fortunate and accrue
great glory and that no ill-omened god might look with ill will
on our ascent to the stars!" And then from on high and in haste
he marched his men at the double and flew down from the ridge
where the descending massif revealed a well constructed road.
The war's first gambits had not caused such an outcry of fear:
word now was a second Hannibal had come, that the twin hosts
would combine their forces and that the generals engorged
with Italian blood from victories won would double the strength
of their battle line. The foe would rush against the walls of Rome
headlong, and witness there the spears still affixed to the gates,
spears flung before by invasive Carthaginian warrior hands.
Enraged at this state of affairs the land of Italy deliberated thus,
" Am I to be contemned to such a degree because of the frenzy

[22] "Castoreum is a chemical compound that mostly comes from a beaver's castor sacks which are located between the pelvis and the base of the tail. Because of its close proximity to the anal glands, castoreum is often a combination of castor gland secretions, anal gland secretions, and urine.The fragrant, brown slime is about the consistency of molasses, though not quite as thick. While most anal secretions stink—due to odor-producing bacteria in the gut—this chemical compound is a product of the beaver's unique diet of leaves and bark. Instead of smelling icky, castoreum has a musky, vanilla scent, which is why food scientists like to incorporate it in recipes." https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/article/beaver-butt-goo-vanilla-flavoring.

of Carthaginians, I who once permitted Saturn to settle here
within my boundaries - he feared the rule of Jupiter, his son –
and granted him a kingdom in our land[23]? It is now a decade
since first Hannibal trod my soil. That youth has waged war
on all save gods, has brought his armoured levies against me
from distant shores and, daring the Alps, has descended on
my land like fire. How many bodies of the slain has my soil
enfolded, my soil so often disfigured by my children laid low!
My orchards now are bare of bounteous fruit, while the wheat
in the fields is prematurely mowed down by swift swords.
The roofs of rustic estates collapse and are brought low
to fall in my lap and deface my kingdom with their remains.
And must I also bear with Hasdrubal who has invaded now
my devastated land and seeks to consume with fire what war
has left? Next the invading Carthaginian will rape my skin
with his plough and sow his seed in the furrowed soil of Italy,
unless I bury in a single tomb all his troops who now run wild
on my pastures broad." In this way the spirit of Italy mused,
while dark Night enclosed the sleep of men and immortal gods,
and made haste to the camp of the Laconian, Claudius Nero[24].
This man was keeping watch on Hannibal from behind his wall
of turf, his enemy deploying his force close by in Lucanian land.
The vision of Italy personified now came near the young man,
" Now Marcellus is ripped away, Nero, pride of the Clausi, you
remain Rome's greatest hope, so rouse yourself and cast off sleep!
If you wish to protract the life of Rome, you must undertake such
an act of daring that, once the enemy is repelled from our walls,
they may tremble at what we have done. Hasdrubal floods
the plains with glittering arms where over centuries the Sena
has maintained the designation inherited from the Gallic tribe[25].
Unless you quickly rush your swift footed squadrons into the fray,
you will come too late to the aid of a devastated Rome laid waste.
Arise and make haste! I have condemned the open countryside
beside the Metaurus to be the burial place for Carthaginian bones."
On saying this she left and departing seemed to drag in her wake
the fearful general and despatch the cavalry through broken gates.

His heart on fire and in confusion Claudius broke the bonds of sleep
and stretching both hands to the stars in an act of supplication prayed
to the Land and the Night and the stars themselves strewn across
the sky, and the Moon, whose silent beams were to guide their path.
He then picked his right hand men, men worthy of such an enterprise.
And where the township of Larinum lies close to the Adriatic coast,
where the battle-hardened Marrucini dwell and the Frentani, tough
and trusty companions in times of war, where the men of Praetutia

[23] See Duff's note *ad loc*. "Saturn, when driven out by his son Jupiter, fled to Italy where King Janus received him kindly and made him a partner of his throne."
[24] Supposedly of Spartan heritage Attus Clausus migrated from Sabine territory to Rome and found the Claudian family.
[25] Supposedly the Senones, invading in 390 BCE, gave their name to a small town and river in Umbria.

cultivate their vineyards and land, taking delighting in their toil,
he flew more quickly than a bird on the wing, than the thunderbolt
of Jupiter, or flash winter floods or the shafts of fleeing Parthians.
Each man spurred himself on, " Come, faster! The gods have decreed
in their uncertainty that our land's salvation, Rome's fate, survival
or fall, depends on your speed." This their cry as onward they sped.
The leader's desire to lead the charge was itself a kind of incentive.
As they strove to match the general's pace, their speed increased,
and tirelessly they were carried forward both by day and by night.

And panic struck Rome when she learned of the mounting woes
of an adverse war and the citizens complained that Nero's hopes
were grandiose, and that he could with a single disastrous defeat
snuff out the city's last breath, "Supplies of gold and armaments
and men are gone - there is no blood left for us to shed.
Shall Nero engage with Hasdrubal as well, when he cannot cope
with Hannibal alone? For when he learns our troops have left
their base to fight elsewhere, the Carthaginian will come again
to attack the city's gates. For Hannibal will come to compete
with his vainglorious brother to secure the greatest prize,
the kudos of a city sacked." The senate was deeply distressed
to its core, but still contemplated how to retain a sense
of decorum, and by what means they might escape the threat
of impending slavery and evade the wrath of iniquitous gods.
While the senate made their complaints, Nero, under the night's
dark shade entered the camp which Livius[26] had pitched hard by
fierce Hasdrubal's troops, and was protected by its battlements.
This man had been a soldier once and well versed in the arts
of Mars and had won sterling fame as a warrior in his youth.
Soon, though, condemned by the false verdict of an unjust mob,
he had spent gloomy years of retirement in his country retreat,
but when a more grievous burden of threat and imminent risk
had arisen and so many leaders were killed, he was recalled
to arms and applied his rage to the needs of his native land.

However, the clandestine arrival of new Roman troops did not
escape Hasdrubal, though cloaked in shadows by cunning Night.
He was moved to notice the visible traces of dust on their shields,
and, proof positive of their forced march, the emaciated state
of both horses and men. The twin trumpets' clarion blasts too
betrayed to the Carthaginian general the fact that two hosts
were conjoined - but if his brother Hannibal were still alive,
how had the consuls been allowed to join their separate hosts
together? Until the truth was revealed his only possible course
of action was inaction and to delay the start of the battle to come.
Nor was his decision to retreat delayed by any inhibiting fear.

Then Night, the mother of slumbers, cleansed mortal hearts

[26] See Duff's note *ad loc*, "M. Livius Salinator, Nero's colleague in the consulship: he had been condemned and fined for embezzlement after the Illyrian war of 219B.C., and had retired from public life."

of cares, and dark shadows nourished the fearful silences,
while Hasdrubal stole out of his camp with hesitant gait
and ordered his muted troops to make their silent escape.
Exploiting the moonless night they sped through the hushed
countryside, avoiding any sound, but the land itself could not
disguise the tramp of so many marching feet, whose path
the land and blind error and the shadows allied to confuse,
and led them in ever decreasing circles, retracing their steps.
For where the river's sinuous stream reversed its curving banks
to retrace its course, flowing back over beds of shingle and stone,
there in vain the Carthaginians too turned back and floundered
in ever decreasing circles, their march frustrated and foiled
as they lost their way and the gift of darkness betrayed them.

Day dawned to reveal their flight. Unbolted, the Roman gates
unleashed an eager storm of cavalry and a tempest of steel
obscured the width of the plain. The battle was not as yet
fought hand to hand, but anticipatory missiles drank blood.
Here Cretan arrows flew, their appointed task to slow down
the Carthaginians' retreat, while here a dark shadowing cloud
of javelins brought death to each and every victim they struck.
The Carthaginians abandoned all plans of flight and in dread
were forced to form a battle line and pin their hopes on the fray.

In the centre of the line was Hasdrubal himself, who recognized
their dire circumstance and the general, from the lofty seat of his
tall warhorse, then raised his hands aloft and lifted too his voice,
" By your own achievements won far and wide across the world,
and by the fame achieved by Hannibal, I beg you demonstrate
that Hannibal's brother himself is come! Fortune strives to give
documentary proof to Latium and show through ruin wrought
that the mighty force that conquered Spain, waged endless war
by the Pillars of Hercules, has now at length advanced on Rome.
Perhaps Hannibal may come himself to share in the battle joined.
Make haste to prepare a sight worthy of the warrior himself
and glut the plain with Roman dead. For every Roman general
who might inspire fear lies dead, thanks to Hannibal. One hope
of safety remains, old Livius, broken by shame and banishment
donates his criminal life. Advance, I beg of you, come, advance
and overthrow the leader it would shame my brother to meet
in battle! Grant his shameful old age a merciful end at the last!"

By contrast Nero, " Why hesitate to bring to an end the horror
of this interminable war? Your marching feet have already won
you glory, men, so let your strong right hands complete the task!
You have abandoned your camp understrength to no good end,
unless victory justifies the risk. Advance and grasp your fame!
That the enemy fell on your arrival will be the very stuff of story."

Again, his shock of white hair distinctive, his helmet removed,
he spoke, " Turn your gaze hither on me, young men, as I charge

into battle. Whatever wide passage is carved open by my sword,
follow me and fill that gap! And finally close off the Alps with steel,
those mountains far too often yawn for Carthaginian trespassers.
For if we do not swiftly decimate their forces with a speedy victory,
and the Punic thunderbolt that is Hannibal is suddenly present here,
what god will rescue any of our number from the shades below?"
Next, helmet on his head once more, he ratified his dreadful threats
with his sword and, grizzled head protected, plunged into the fray.
He dealt out death with every spear he cast, wherever the packed
formations of the enemy were at their densest on the battlefield,
as he put to flight in confusion Macae, the fierce Autololes, also
the young warriors of Rhodes with their long locks of hair uncut.

Nabis, come from Ammon's prophetic sands, waged toxic war,
secure in the belief he was protected from the shocks of death,
because his god protected him. He had in prideful tones declared
he would decorate his country's temples with booty won in Italy.
His blue robes shone with Garamantian gems[27], as does the stars'
scattered luminescence glow, spangled across the night time sky.
His helmet he had made burn with gems and his shield with gold.
A woven fillet hanging before his helmet's horns depicted an image
of consecrated terrors and all the honours due to wrathful deities.
He fought with the bow, his quiver of arrows and javelins dressed
with a viper's venom, since toxins were his chosen weapon of war.
And more, taking his seat on the back of his horse in the usual way,
he bore on his lap across the plain the weight of a Sarmatian pike,
which he drove down upon his enemies when they confronted him.
And the before Nero's eyes he transfixed Sabellus' body and shield
with his spear, and cried out aloud in glory and glorified his deity,
his god, Ammon, as he carried the corpse away from the battlefield,
but the elder consul, Nero, could not endure this arrogance and rage,
this barbarian bombast and with but one single cast of his javelin
he robbed at once the victor of his prize and life, victorious himself.

When Hasdrubal heard the cry that accompanied Nabis' tragic fall,
he rushed to the fore and from behind with his spear's fatal strike
pierced Arabus to his skeletal core, as he began to plunder the hero's
bejewelled dress and strip his garments stiff with their golden cloth.
The wretched man had grasped the vestments in both his hands
and in haste had ripped them off, denuding the still quivering limbs.
So now he fell back upon the lifeless and plundered corpse, restored
to his enemy his sacred jewelled robes and threads of golden cloth.
Then Canthus, the lord of that coast, on which the Philaeni, unbeaten
in war, bestowed a famous name[28], yes, Canthus slaughtered Rutilus,
a man whose wealth was sheep, for whom a thousand head of sheep
did bleat in upland pens. He had lived a carefree life of leisure
and peace, now easing the sun's fierce heat for his flocks with cool

[27] Emeralds.

[28] See Duff's note, *ad loc*, "The Philaeni were two Carthaginian brothers who consented to be buried alive, in order to give Carthage the advantage in a boundary dispute with Cyrene. Their place of burial, near the Greater Syrtis, bore their name."

river streams, and now taking delight in shearing their snow white
fleece, resting on the verdant grass, or, when the ewes returned
to the sheds at night from grazing, he would watch young lambs
and observe how they could recognize their individual dams.
He fell, betrayed by his shield, its treacherous metal transfixed,
and too late lamented that he had left behind his ancestral farm.

So all the more fiercely the Roman throngs pressed their attack,
like a flood, a tempestuous storm, like the jagged lightning blast
or the sea that flees the northern winds, or the vaulted clouds
that scud before the mix of easterly gales and driving rain.
The standards of the Gallic forces were stationed in the front line,
colossal men, whose ranks were suddenly smashed by a brutal wedge
of the Roman troops. The Gauls, exhausted by their wayward march,
unused to the sun's heat and breathless from their protracted efforts,
succumbed to their characteristic fears, exposing their retreating backs
to Roman spears and the arrows that pursued them and cut them off
from flight. A single wound felled Thyrmis, while Rhodanus died
from many. Struck already by a deadly arrow's shaft, a javelin toppled
Morinus at last from his saddle even as he was falling from his mount.
Then keenly Livius pursued their retreat, giving free rein to his horse,
and drove his steed into the midst of the ranks of their departing mounts

and soldiery. His flashing sword first severed the grossly swollen neck
of Mosa, who was in full retreat, whose head and weighty helmet crashed
from on high to the ground below, while his terrified horse carried off,
uncontrolled, the still saddled and truncated corpse back into the fray.
Here Cato – for he too was vibrantly engaged in the battle's midst -
cried out, " If only this warrior had stood in young Hannibal's path,
when we first lost the Alpine passes at the war's beginning! Great gods,
how great an arm was left then unemployed by Rome! How many dead
did the tragic verdict of that crooked court save for the Carthaginians!"

By now their battle line was falling back and the terror of the Gauls
had infected all with similar fears and, the Fate of the Carthaginians
on the brink of disaster, winged Victory had flown to the Roman side.
The consul, mounted high, made his way, as if now in the flush of youth
renewed, and in triumphant majesty seemed himself to grow in stature.
But see! – the Carthaginian general arrives and brings in his wake
a troop of cavalry, stained white with dust, and, brandishing his arms,
he cries, " Hold hard your flight! Who is this foe from whom you flee?
And are you not ashamed? For an elderly man in his declining years
has driven back our troops. My question is, 'Has my right hand become
degenerate in this affray?' The founder of my noble clan was Belus,
and bound to me by lineage and name is Dido, the Carthaginian queen,
and my father Hamilcar must be counted as the foremost warrior of all.
My brother is Hannibal, to whom both mountains and lakes, both plains
and rivers give way, and almighty Carthage herself counts me second
to Hannibal alone, while the Spanish tribes of Guadalquivir who felt
my right hand in battle have put me on a par with Hannibal himself."
And even as he spoke he charged into the midst of the enemy's line,

but, when he saw the splendid flash of the consul's fresh forged arms,
he let fly his spear in premature haste, which only pierced the bronze
shield's outer edge and the breastplate's protective rim where it met
the shoulder's tip, and so the javelin merely grazed the targeted trunk
and extracted but a minimum show of blood, and so this errant spear
promised only to deceive the joyous outcome of Hasdrubal's prayers.

The Romans were shocked and this fearful spectacle troubled much
their hearts. The consul though mocked his enemy's endeavours,
" You might believe my body had been but scratched by the nails
of a trumpet frenzied Bacchant or wounded by an infant's fist!
So, men, advance and teach them the heft and weight of wounds
inflicted by a Roman's hand." And then indeed a massive cascade
of missiles was fired such that the sun was eclipsed by its density.
And now the bodies of men cut down on either side lay everywhere
across the spreading plain, and the cadavers that were immersed
in the stream piled higher and higher to conjoin the river's banks.
Just as when Dictynna[29] makes the shaded hills her hunting ground
and so gladdens her dear mother Latona's heart with the spectacle,
while she beats her prey from Cynthus'[30] bush and crosses the slopes
of Maenalus, where her company of water nymphs rush to attend
and so make rattle and vibrate their quivers packed with shafts.
The wild beasts pour out through the rocks and from their dens
to be laid low along the valleys, the rivers and moss green caves
in diversities of death. From her mountain prospect high Latonia
reviews the gratifying harvest and in it takes exuberant joy.

When Nero was apprised first of his elder colleague's wound,
he savagely broke a passage through the throng, and when he saw
the battle was equally poised, he cried, " What future remains
at the last for Italy? For if you do not conquer Hasdrubal, how will
you conquer Hannibal? " He charged headlong to the battle's midst
in a fury and when Nero saw the Carthaginian general's rampage
in the van, he became like some leviathan of the rabid deep, long time
made sport of and tossed by the sterile seas that yield no sustenance,
and when in desperation it has spotted a fish far off across the seas,
it rages and, targeting its victim that swims beneath the surface waves,
inhales vast tracts of sea to capture all the creatures that swim therein.
His words were as quick as his spear, " No more," he swore, " will you
evade my grasp. The trackless forests of the Pyrenees will not deceive
me here, nor will you frustrate me more with worthless promises,
as once before you fraudulently did when you were caught in Spain,
and escaped my good right hand by trickery and a treaty breached."

So Nero spoke and hurled his javelin, nor was his cast made in vain.
For when the weapon's powerful point lodged in his unguarded side,
Hasdrubal fell, and Nero fearlessly drew his sword and attacked him,
and spoke, forcing down the boss of his shield on the trembling limbs,
" If by chance you should wish at this extremity that any last words

[29] Diana.
[30] A mountain on the island of Delos.

be brought to your brother, Hannibal, I shall deliver them myself."
In reply the Carthaginian declared, " Death holds no fears for me!
Enjoy your victory, until too soon my brother will avenge my death!
And if you are prepared to carry my final injunctions to Hannibal,
then listen, When he is victorious, let him burn down the Capitol
and let him mingle my bones and ashes with the ashes and bones
of Jupiter!" He would have wished in his burning rage on the point

of death to say more, but his conqueror's sword sliced his neck
and struck off his treacherous head. On their general's demise,
the Carthaginians lost their faith in Mars and were mown down.

Dark night now stole away the day and cut sun's journey short,
as the Romans renewed their strength with a frugal meal and sleep,
and before day dawned, they carried their victorious eagles back
from where they had come, to the camp which fear had kept closed.
Then Nero, carrying the leader's decapitated head high on the point
of his pike, said, " Hannibal, with your brother's head we have repaid
in full and more the debts of Cannae and the Trebia and the shores
of Trasimene. Go now and fight again two treacherous wars at once,
and summon twin armies to your side! For this is the sure reward
for any who choose to cross the Alps and ally themselves with you! "
Then Hannibal held back his tears and relieved the disaster's effect
by his brave demeanour and in silent inner commune he swore
he would in time despatch fit sacrificial victims to Hasdrubal's shade.
He moved his camp some way off and by his procrastination masked
a reverse, avoiding thereby too the risks of an uncertain campaign.

Punica: Book 16

Silius Italicus

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Punica Bk. 16

Hannibal is active in Bruttian territory (1-22). *The Carthaginians are expelled from Spain and Mago on his defeat flees to Carthage, while Hanno is taken prisoner by Scipio* (23-77). *The army of Hasdrubal, son of Gisgo is destroyed* (78-114). *Scipio is joined by Masinissa, a Numidian prince* (115-167). *Scipio and Hasdrubal appear at the court of the Numidian king, Syphax, who makes a treaty with the Romans. However, evil omens follow* (168-274). *Scipio returns to Spain to hold games in honour of his father and uncle* (275-591). *On his return to Rome Scipio is elected consul and despite Fabius' opposition is given permission to cross over to Africa* (592-700).

In mourning for his country's fate and for his own, Hannibal was
received in the land of the Bruttii[1] and, barricaded there in camp,
began to concoct a plan for renewing the war he had postponed.
So the bull, deprived of his stall and his kingdom lost, takes refuge
in the woods and in some closed off forest glade far from his herd
prepares himself for battle, and now with fearsome bellowing fills
the woods with dread and charges through the precipitous rocks
en route and with angry horns flattens trees and in his rage attacks
the crags themselves, while the herdsmen tremble, as they watch
him prepare for battles to come from their cliff top vantage points.
And Hannibal's boundless energy may well have exhausted Rome,
had he had the needs of war, but that energy was held in check
by perverse and jealous rivalries at home, and so he was forced
by lack of matériel to rein his spirit in and lose its edge in idleness.
However, his handiwork had won him a formidable reputation,
his past and bloody victories inspired a dread that kept him safe
from assassination attempts. The very name of Hannibal sufficed
itself to remedy the lack of military supplies and coin, of fresh
troops newly recruited. This diverse and polyglot gathering
of men, whose barbarian customs were often at variance, still
stood firm, and even in circumstances dire their deep respect
for Hannibal maintained unflinching loyalty of heart and mind.

Nor was it only in Italy that the god of war was happy to smile
on the men of Rome. For now at last in Spain the Carthaginians
were in retreat and being driven from that land of ore and gold.
Already Mago[2] was ousted from his camp and, driven by fear,
had left Spain and was crossing the sea to Carthage under full sail.

And look, Fortuna was preparing yet another prestigious victory
for Scipio, not content with a single boon! For Hanno was aroused
and approached at speed, leading a force of barbarians, all clashing
their shields, indigenous Spanish tribes at the double - but too late!
Mago lacked nor the art nor skills of war, nor yet a good right hand,
had not the target of his assault been Scipio. For the Roman general

[1] In the toe of Italy's "boot".

[2] Hannibal's youngest brother and one of his team of officers in the early successes against Rome was wounded in Cisalpine Gaul in the summer of 203 B.C.E and died of his wounds *en route* by ship back to Carthage.

eclipsed all these attributes by the far greater size of his armament,
as does Phoebe the light of stars, and her brother's radiance her own,
as Atlas overtops his neighbouring peaks, and as the Nile out floods
all rivers and Father Oceanus is dominant over Neptune's blue seas.
It was when Mago was hastily making his camp – for evening's shade
had begun to decant an unhelpful darkness from the gloomy sky –
that Scipio attacked and with a sudden tumultuous crash Mago's
ramparts and his newly dug earthworks completely collapsed,
all incomplete. The great weight of the excavated grassy turfs fell
itself upon the fallen men and the sods became a soldiers' tomb.

Only one of these men possessed a fighting spirit worthy of note,
whose work might suit the prize of being recorded for posterity.
He was a Cantabrian, one Larus, whose mighty frame and limbs
could inspire fear even when bereft of weapons, but after the way
of his tribe he waged war, armed with the fearsome battle-axe.
Although he saw his men beaten and confounded on all sides,
and the noble born youth of his fellow countrymen destroyed,
alone he began to fill that place with the slain. When his foe
was at close quarters, he satisfied his blood lust with a blow
to the enemy's brow, or if the call to battle came from the left,
he turned his weapon around to strike with a sideways blow.
And when a fearsome enemy attacked from behind, he was expert
at wielding his axe with a disciplined and backhanded stroke,
a man whose confidence encompassed all the battlefield skills.
At him Scipio, the winning general's brother, hurled his spear
with mighty force. This weapon closely shaved the shaggy pelt
of Larus' hide skin helmet, for in the rush and haste it flew far
too high, and was turned further away by the tribesman's axe.
That blow increased the warrior's rage, made him even more
formidable, so that he struck a huge and crashing blow with his
barbarian axe. The field of battle trembled and the boss of Scipio's
three-folded shield rang out under the blow's hammer weight -
a blow he paid for in full. For while his hand recovered, it was
cut off by Scipio's sword and died still gripping its beloved axe.
When their last defence had fallen, the wretched forces turned
as one in flight and were scattered in haste across the land.
This was now no scene of battle, but a series of tragic images
of punishment, of the dead and dying and of their nemesis.
See Hanno dragged through the midst of the crowd, hands tied
behind his back, and, although a prisoner of war in chains,
he begged for his life – so sweet it is look upon the light of day!
The Roman general spoke to him, "Are these the men who claim
world dominion, to whom the toga must yield and Quirinus'
sacred race? If slavery suits you well, why always wage new wars?"

Amidst all this, advance news was received from a mounted scout
that Hasdrubal, all unaware of this defeat, was marching hard to join
his countrymen. So Scipio force-marched his men to meet with him,
and when in delight he saw the confrontation he desired at hand,
and the enemy troops themselves quick-marching to their death,

he looked heavenward and said, “O gods above, I desire no more
than this one day. It is sufficient that you are bringing the fugitives
to battle. This is enough. Soldiers, all that remains is in our hands!
Go to it, then! Advance, I pray. Behold, my father and my uncle both
inspire your righteous rage! My own two gods of war be present, lead
us now, and I will follow! You will see today a slaughter well worthy
of your reputations, unless I am much deceived in my mind!
When will there be a measure set upon these constant wars
in the land of Spain? Indeed, at some time in the future that day
will surely dawn, when, Carthage, I will see you in fearful dread
and trembling at the sound of my men bringing war home to you.”

He had spoken and then the clangour of trumpets broke out.
The very stars re-echoed the sound of thunder and feral cries.
The battle was joined. The violence of the rabid deep claims
so many lives when the North and hungry South winds drown
fleets packed with men beneath their swollen, billowing waves,
or when the Dog Star, kindling his death dealing fires, burns
and scorches the breathless globe with savage incandescence.
So many men did the tides of war despatch, killed by the sword.
No losses in war are matched by earth’s cataclysmic quakes,
nor by the savage carnage occasioned by the madness of beasts
in their inhospitable haunts through wilderness wastes.
The plains and valleys are awash with blood and spears grow dull.
The men of Africa died and the men of Spain, the lovers of war.
A part of the line struggled to stay in place despite being weak,
its shields being pierced, where Hasdrubal brandished his spear.
Nor would that day have brought an end to the battle, nor would
their courage have failed, had not an arrow pierced his corslet
and caused a superficial surface wound that persuaded him
and take instant flight. He escaped the battle on a speedy horse
to a secret place and made his way through the dark of night
along the coast to the port and harbour of Tartessus.

The close companion of Hasdrubal and his right hand man in war
was Masinissa, ruler of the Numidians, whose name was soon to be
distinguished through his lengthy treaty and cultural ties with Rome.
This man, exhausted by the hardships of flight, was snatching sleep
which the darkness of night recommended, when suddenly the crown
of his head glowed red, was the seat of a gentle flame which seemed
to envelop his curling hair and spread itself across his shaggy brow.
His household slaves ran up and with cooling waters made haste
to douse the conflagration that licked and crept around his head,
but his aged mother saw this was an omen from the gods and said,
“ So be it, gods! Now look on us with kindness and bring to pass
your portents! And may god’s light illumine his head for centuries!
Do not, my son, do not fear these auspicious omens of the gods
or hold in dread these sacred flames that play about your head.
This fire promises you an alliance with the Dardan people of Rome,
will give you kingdoms far greater in extent than those of your
forebears, will forever link your name with Rome’s official history.”

Such her prophecies and these transparent prodigies fired the young
man's heart, nor had his courage won any due reward from Carthage,
while Hannibal himself was daily more modest in his military dreams.

When dawn was clearing the dark shades of night from the sky,
and scarce had tinted with red the faces of the setting Pleiades,
Masinissa made his way to the Romans' camp, though still foes,
and when he had entered the fort and Scipio had greeted him
with an amicable face, the king of Numidia addressed him so,
"The warnings divine and my mother's sacred sense of them
and, leader of Rome, your own virtues, so beloved of the gods,
have brought me here - not unwillingly estranged from Tyre.
If we have seemed often eager to face *your* thunderbolts, we
are surely bringing you, Scipio, an ally full worthy of yourself,
a son of the thunderer[3]? No vain levity of incertitude of mind,
nor any fickleness of spirit has necessitated our presence here,
nor any hope that we may share the prizes of a successful war.
I flee from perfidy and a race that was born itself of perfidy!
Your campaign is finished now beside the Pillars of Hercules[4],
so join us now and invade the very mother of perfidious war[5].
That man who has for twice five years dominated Italy's land
and brought siege ladders against the walls of Rome, must now
be forced back to Africa by you by means of fire and sword."

So spoke Numidia's king. Then Scipio grasped his right hand
in his own and said, " If Rome appears to you to be noble in war,
she is even more so in pledging her word! Dismiss those forked
tongued partners from your mind. For, Masinissa, the mighty
rewards your flawless virtue demands await you and I shall be
the sooner defeated in battle than in gratitude for loyalty shown.
As for the future, you recommend that I now bring fires to Africa,
and the time *is* ripe. Such purposes have weighed upon my heart
of late and thoughts of Carthage have much exercised my mind. "
He then gave gifts to the young Masinissa, a richly worked robe
and a war-horse, saddled with purple and Mago's own mount
until unhorsed by Scipio, a horse whose mettle Scipio himself
approved, also the cup of gold from which Hasdrubal himself
had poured drink offerings to the gods, and a full crested helm.
And then when the treaty with the young king was formalized,
he began to action his plans for toppling the towers of Carthage.

The richest ruler in the Massylian territories then was Syphax,
a man of not inconsiderable mana. Countless tribes were used
to seeking justice at his court and his dominion reached the sea.
Syphax was rich in land and horses and in those fearful beasts,
war elephants, and an elite army of hand-picked warriors.
There was no man who could outstrip this king in solid gold
or ivory, nor dye more wool than he in brazen Gaetulian vats[6].

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[3] See Bk. 13. 637.
[4] I.e. the totality of Spain is under your control froom north to south.
[5] Carthage herself.

Now Scipio, keen to gain access to these resources and, in fear
of the result if the king and Carthage allied, ordered his fleet
to set sail, was already in truth contemplating his war in Africa,
but when the voyage was finished and his ships were at anchor,
Hasdrubal, in fearful retreat aboard ship along these very coasts,
appeared and in dire circumstances tried to make fresh treaties
and attempted to recruit the Massylian troops to Carthage's side.

When Syphax heard that the generals of those nations had come,
who were in dispute and contending mightily over which race
should hold dominion and gain hegemony over the entire wide world,
he was filled with pride in his heart and kindly bad them to audience,
and he was himself exalted by the such great honour shown his realm.
With a cheerful expression he ran his eyes over the faces before him
and first addressed the young Roman, before Scipio himself could begin,
"How glad I am to see and give you peaceful welcome, Scipio, most fair
of all the sons of Rome! How gladly I recall your father's countenance,
and your own appearance puts me much in mind of your sire himself!
I remember when I visited the shores of Erythia[7] and Herculean Gades
to study the sea and observe its movements, the ebbing and the flow
of the tides, and there by the neighbouring streams of the Guadalquivir
I saw the two great Scipios[8] and was stirred by an unexpected emotion.
Those gentlemen then presented me with choice gifts from the spoils
of war, weapons still unknown in my kingdom at that time and bridles
for the horses and composite bows, which were in no way less effective
than our javelins, and they drafted certain veteran masters of arms
into my wild ranks of irregular and unruly tribes to implant in them
your far more formal disciplines and approaches to the art of war,
but when in return I tried to bring them gifts of snow-white tusks
of ivory and of gold from my own home country's bounteous supply,
all my entreaties failed: each general accepted only a single sword
for himself, enclosed each in its peculiar scabbard of carven ivory.
And so, come now, Scipio, and enter my home with joy in your heart!
Moreover, since Fortuna has brought the Carthaginian general here
from over the sea, attend to what I may say with a generous ear.
And you, Hasdrubal, who rule the battlements of Tyrian Carthage,
I beg of you, lend your ears to my words and pay them attention due.
Who can still be in ignorance of the fearful tempest of rabid war
that has raged through the lands of Italy and now puts under threat
the mighty city of Rome itself, and how for twice five long years
the savage soils of Sicily and then of Spain have drunk their fill
of Carthaginian blood? Why should not these tragic wars now cease
at last, and you yourselves agree willingly to lay down your arms?
Let Africa and Europe both maintain their separate boundaries.
It will be no disgrace if your two sides can reach some covenant,

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[6] See Duff's notes *ad loc.* " Syphax was in fact king of the Masaesyli, who occupied the western part of the extensive country called loosely by the Romans Numidia: he was a ruling sovereign, while Masinissa's father, Gala, was still king of the Massyli or eastern Numidians." and " Gaetulia was a district of Africa where the natives made a purple dye from shell-fish: cp. 1. 569."

[7] The island on which the city of Gades was built.

[8] The two Scipios, young Scipio's uncle and father.

with Syphax as your expediter." Scipio though did not allow the king
to continue, but described the Roman way and the senate's command
of affairs and told the king to refrain from such vain hopes and designs,
since the senate alone would consider and decide on these matters.
The debate was closed at once and what was left of the day unspent
thereafter was devoted to the business of feasting and drinking.
Then after the banquet was done they abandoned their bodies to sleep
and for one night were freed from the harsh constraints of government.

And now the dawn emerged from her threshold to bring a new day
to the earth, and the steeds of the sun abandoned their stalls once more
for the collar, while the sun himself had not yet mounted his chariot,
but the seas already glowed red with the promise of sunlight to come.
Then Scipio arose from his bed and, his face quite calm and at ease,
made his urgent way to the palace and home of the Massylian king,
who followed the ancestral custom of nurturing lion cubs to tame
their native savagery and expel their rage with gentle management.
And at that time the king was stroking their tawny necks and manes
as they gambled and played, and fearless grasped their dreadful jaws.
When Syphax heard that the Roman general had arrived he put on
his military cloak and took up the ancient sceptre of his realm in his
left hand. His temples were bound about with fillets of white cloth
and at his side his sword was hung, according to his customary way.
He then called Scipio into his house and the sceptred monarch
and his guest were seated as honoured equals in an inner room.

The conqueror of Spain was the first to speak in the following words,
"Lord Syphax, most honoured king, when I had at last subdued
the Pyrenean tribes, my first and most important care was quickly
to come to your realm, nor did the dangers of the intervening sea
delay me. We seek nothing that will cause your kingdom toil
nor yet dishonour: conjoin your heart and mind in an alliance
with the senate and people of Rome and share in their success.
Since neither the Massylian tribes nor your lands that extend
to the Syrtes nor all of your wide ancestral territories will bring
you greater glory than will Romulan virtue securely pledged
in alliance with you and the prizes won from alliance with Rome.
What else to say but this? Not a single one of the gods above
looks with kindness on the man who harms the armies of Rome!"

The king listened and nodded his head in joyful agreement
and, embracing Scipio, said, "Let us consolidate these fine
beginnings and let all the gods above attend our solemnities,
both Jupiter of the horned head[9] and as well Capitoline Jove."
And at once an altar of excavated turfs was raised on high,
and the sacrificial victim, a bull, was stood beneath the axe,
when suddenly the beast broke its chains and sprang away,
fled from the altars and filled all the frantic palatial halls
with its bellowing, and its mixture of hoarse, breathless

[9] Jupiter Ammon.

roars, panting spread terror through the fearful house.
The fillet, ancestral mark of office, dislodged from the king's
brow, fell away unprovoked to leave Syphax's temples bare.
Such were the gloomy omens the heavenly gods did send
to the kingdom doomed to fall, grim omens of a savage fate.
A time would come when Syphax, broken in war and hurled
from his throne, would be led to Jupiter's temple by Scipio,
who now as suppliant was seeking an alliance with the king.
When this was done he sought the port once more to launch
his ships with a following wind and return to familiar Spain.

The natives gathered in eagerness and the conquered Pyrenees
despatched their various tribes. They were all of one mind:
together they proclaimed Scipio king and saluted him as such.
This was their clear acknowledgement of the summit of virtue,
but when with a calm and friendly face he declined their offer
as unbefitting a Roman gentleman and had explained Rome's
ancestral and patriarchal ways and had declared that Rome
could not in any shape or form endure the designation "king",
he turned to his final objective, since no further foes survived,
and summoned at once the men of Rome and the tribes-folk
of the Baetus and Tagus to address their assembled company,
"The goodwill of the gods above has nodded its assent to us
so that the Africans have been expelled from this periphery
of the world, have either perished on these plains, or, Spain
lost, tread now ancestral sands, exiles from an adopted home.
My present intent is to honour the graves of my men who fell
in your land and grant their shades the peace that they demand.
So be fair minded now and lend to me your sympathetic ears.
When the passage of the sun has fulfilled its seventh course,
let all that are strong in arms and steel, are skilled in the art
of driving the four-horse chariot, in whom is planted the will
to win and the joy of cleaving heaven's winds with the javelin,
let them convene to compete for the glory of a victor's crown.
I shall give worthy prizes, glorious spoils from the Tyrian loot.
No man of mine will depart without a gift given by me!"
And so he fired the host with the desire for glory and gifts.

The set day arrived and all the plain resounded with the din
of a countless crowd, and Scipio with tears filling his eyes led
the pantomimic obsequies[10] with appropriate funeral rites.
The Spaniards and every man in the Roman force bring gifts
and add them to the growing mass of the blazing pyres,
while Scipio himself, holding now bowls of milk, now cups
of sacred wine besprinkles the altars with scented blooms.
He then invokes the spirits of the dead and weeping sings
their praises and honours their manifold accomplishments.
He next returns to the racecourse and initiates there the first
of the horse racing events and duly announces the sprint.

[10] The bodies of his father and uncle were, of course, absent.

Before the starting gates were even released the fickle crowd
surged back and forth in a fever of partisan enthusiasm,
kept their eyes on the start and the horses milling behind.

And now the bolts shot back at the sound of the signal made
and scarce before the plunging first hoof was seen there arose
a furious clamour of cheering to storm at the heavens above.
The crowd leant forward like the drivers themselves and each
pursued with his gaze his own team and at the top of his voice
urged on the horses themselves. The passion of the throng
now shook the course and each man in madness lost his wits.
They all crane forward and shouting try to direct the teams.
A yellow cloud billows up, arising from the sandy soil, to hide
in its density the drivers' labours and the horses' placings.
One fellow is mad for a spirited horse, another a driver's skill.
Some burn with passion for a horse from home, while others
are fired by the reputation of an ancient stud. Some entrust
their sanguine hopes to an inexperienced beast, not used
to bearing the reins, while others prefer the more mature
competitor that impresses as a veteran, well tried and true.
Gallician Lampon's speeding chariot was first from the gate,
devouring the ground with enormous strides. The wind
and the rest were left in his wake, as he flew through the air…
The cheering crowd were at a fever pitch of excitement,
believing their prayers had come true after such a fine start.
But those with a deeper expertise and knowledge of the sport
complained that too much energy was wasted on the start
of the race and in fruitless barracking cried out from afar
that he was tiring out his team with indiscriminate effort,
"Hey, Cyrnus (Cyrnus was the charioteer) what's the rush?
Ease off on the whip, why not, and pull back on the reins!"
This fell on deaf ears! And on he drove, careless of his team,
not mindful of how much of the course remained to be run.

Then next and running close in second place, a bare length
of a chariot behind, came Panchates, a horse that was bred
in Asturia, distinguished by the blaze of white on his head
and too his four white socks, the distinctive mark of his line.
This beast was full of heart, although he was short in the limb
and in conformation unsightly, but his spirited nature made
for him wings and he sped over the course, ignoring the reins.
He seemed to grow in stature and his legs to extend as he ran.
His driver, Hiberus, glowed with the scarlet Cinyphian dye.

In third place raced Pelorus, neck and neck with Caucasus,
the latter a nasty beast, unloving of the gently patted neck,
but one to take delight in champing on the iron bit clamped
in its mouth till the blood and foam both bubbled and flowed.
Pelorus though responded well to the reins and was obedient,
would never deviate off course nor ever lead his chariot astray,
but on an inside line his left wheel would skim the turning post.

His neck was distinctively long and his abundant mane flowed
down over his withers. And *mirabile dictu* it was said he had
no sire: his dam Harpe had given birth to him on the plains
of the Vettones, impregnated there by the Zephyrs of spring.
The noble Durius was driving this chariot along the flat course,
while Caucasus had put his trust in the ancient driver Atlas.
The Aetolian city of Tyde, founded by the wandering Diomedes,
had entered Caucasus in the race. The story was that he derived
from the Trojan line of horses stolen from Aeneas by the son
of Tydeus[11] when successful in his daring raid beside the Simoïs,
but Atlas was running last alongside Durius, both at the rear
and matching their speeds. One might think that they were both
intent on calmly running side by side at an even shared pace.

And now when they had completed almost half the course,
they began to quicken their pace and the spirited Panchates
was striving to overhaul the leading team, and now seemed
to rise higher and moment by moment to mount the chariot
in front of him and the hooves on his racing forelegs struck
hard, shaking the chariot of the foremost Gallician team.
Then when Hiberus, who was running in second place, saw
that Cyrnus' Gallician team was spent and his chariot no more
was leaping ahead, while the steaming team was forced on only
by a fierce and constant use of the whip, then as when a storm
rushes down from the mountains above, he stretched forward
above his horses' necks and hanging over their heads he urged
the fiery Panchates on, whose second place was hard to bear,
and both applied the whip and shouted his encouragement,
"Will any other lead and win the prize when you compete,
Asturian? Up now and fly, glide swiftly over the plain on your
accustomed wings! Lampon is finished and spent, reduced,
his lungs are blown and panting has no wind left to bring
him home to the end of the course." This said, Panchates surged
and picked up the pace he had attained from the starting gate
and left Cyrnus behind in his wake, despite his attempts
to run a curving course to block the way or match his speed.

The sky and race-course erupted with the spectators' shrill
cries. Flying high through the winds he lifted too his neck
and mane ever higher and in triumph the victor Panchates
piloted his fellow yoke mates from the front of the team.

At the rear were Atlas now and Durius, both of whom tried
every race-track trick. First one made an attempt to pass
on the left, and then the other strove hard to gain the lead
on the right, but each man's strategies failed, came to naught.
At last Durius trusting in the bloom of his comparative youth,
leant forward and jerking the reins he placed his chariot
across his rival's course and struck and upset Atlas' vehicle

[11] Diomedes.

and he, the older and weaker man, made just complaint,
"Beware your wayward career!" he cried, "What insanity
of competition is this? You strive to kill my horses and me!"
And as he cried out he tumbled from the broken chariot
face down, and equally his wretched team of horses was
strewn randomly across the track. His conqueror shook
his reins to speed along the now vacant centre of the course
and Pelorus in his flight left the struggling Atlas far behind.
And he soon overhauled Cyrnus' exhausted team and chariot.
Cyrnus learned too late the wisdom of delay and of sparing
his team, as with speeding wheels his swift rival flashed by.
The roar of the crowd and the cries of his fans drove him on.
Pelorus' head was stretching now over the nervous shoulders
and back of Hiberus, and the charioteer felt the horse's hot
breath upon his back and the warmth of its foam on his neck.
Meanwhile Durius pressed on along the course accelerating
his team with the whip - with some success. For he seemed
to catch his rival up on the right, to match him stride for stride.
Inspired by such great hopes, "Pelorus," he cried, "it is now,
yes now, the time to demonstrate the West-wind was your sire.
Let beasts learn that derive their line from mere mortal stock
how much the progeny gotten of immortal seed excels.
As victor you will offer gifts and raise an altar to your sire!"
And perhaps he would have sanctified to Zephyrus the altar
he had vowed, had he not, betrayed by his heady success
and nervous joy, let fall and lost his whip while yet he spoke.
Then wretched indeed, as if the crown of victory had slipped
from his head, he turned upon himself in rage and ripped
the gold-embroidered corselet from his breast and wept,
and at the same time poured bitter complaints to the stars.
Nor now could the chariot obey the lash of the missing whip,
instead of which the team was beaten in vain with the reins.

Panchates meanwhile was sure of glory and drove himself
towards the finishing post and claimed first prize, his head
held high. A gentle breeze cooled the mane that fell about
his neck and shoulders. And then he reared upon his proud
and nimble limbs to triumph in the tumult of praise.
The competitors each received one gift the same, an axe
of engraved solid silver. Each place received another prize.
First prize was a speedy horse, the not undistinguished gift
of the Massylian king. Two cups overlaid with gold plate
from the Tagus, Carthaginian booty, provided the prize
for second place. Third won a ferocious lion's shaggy skin
and a Carthaginian helmet crested with bristling plumes.
And finally Atlas, despite the fact that the old man fell out
of the race when his chariot was destroyed, was called
by Scipio, who pitied his advanced age and evil chance.
A young and handsome slave was given to him to serve
his every need, and as well a skin cap of Spanish design.

This done Scipio summoned entrants for the foot race
and he offered rich rewards to intensify their eagerness,
"The winner will receive this helmet in which Hasdrubal
affrighted the forces of Spain. Second place will collect
this sword, won by my father from the dead Hymepsa[12].
A bull will be the consolation prize for the third in line.
The rest of the field of keen competitors will depart
content with a brace of javelins forged of Spanish steel."

Tartessos and Hesperos, two youths in the bloom of youth,
presented themselves to a roar of applause from the crowd.
The town of Gades, the famed Phoenician colony, sent them.
Next came Baeticus, his cheeks endowed with youthful down.
For Corduba had named him after her river[13] and had spent
no small sums in sponsoring his successful sporting career.
Then Eurytus, ginger headed, but with a body white as snow,
filled all the bleachers round about with clamorous applause.
The high hill of Saetabis had given him birth and nurtured him,
and his parents were there in a fever of nervous affection.
Next in line were Lamus and Sicoris, sons of bellicose Ilerda,
and finally Theron, who drank the water of Oblivio's[14]stream,
which flows and laps its banks with the waters of amnesia.

Their toes on the line, breasts thrust forward, they stood,
hearts beating hard and aflutter with the desire for praise,
when on the trumpet's blast they sprang out from the start,
far swifter than arrows launched from the driving string.
The clamorous passions were shared as spectators craned
forward on tip toe to encourage in breathless enthusiasm
their favourites, each by name. The noble field is carried
across the plain, but leaves no trace in the sand as it flies.
The young men were all in their prime and fair of face,
and all were light of foot and each one worthy of a victory.

At the half way point Eurytus pressed to take a narrow lead
of but a few strides, was running in first place, but only just
in front. Bold Hesperos, scarcely slower, was planting the front
of his foot in the imprints made by the leading competitor's
heels. Eurytus was quite satisfied to merely maintain his lead,
while Hesperos himself was satisfied that he could take the lead.
Then they strive to increase their pace and their fierce ambition
powers their bodies. Effort enhances their youthful splendour.
But see! Theron, running easily had been bringing up the rear,
but at last decided he had conserved sufficient of his energy
and standing tall he tapped into all his unexpected reserves
of strength and suddenly sprinted forward to leave the winds

[12] Apparently a Carthaginian warrior otherwise unknown.
[13] The Baetis, now Guadalquivir.
[14] Silius indulges his appetite for antiquarianism and obscure reference: the river *Oblivio* in the land of the Gravii calls to mind the river Lethe, the underworld waters of forgetfulness, exploited by Plato in the myth of the *Phaedo*.

in his wake: you might have thought it was Mercury himself
in flight through the skies, propelled by wingèd sandals.
The spectators were amazed as little by little he overhauled
the rest and from last place was now racing in the third
position and was pressing hard upon the heels of Hesperos.
And not only the youth he closely pursued, but also Eurytus,
hopes high of first place, grew nervous at this show of speed.
Tartessos was running fourth, but if the first three maintained
the places they had gained, he would labour hard to no avail.
He trailed his brother, but Theron had come between them –
and Theron, out of patience now, lifted his effort, fired himself
along the plain, overtook Hesperos, much to his deep chagrin!
Only one youth was left - the finishing post hard by inspired
their weary limbs. And so each now summoned what strength
their exertions had left them for one brief final endeavour,
while hope still burned, despite their exhaustion and the fear
that pierced the heart. They came abreast of each other,
to race along side by side, might have made the winning post
in a dead heat, deservedly to share first prize, had Hesperos,
now pressing hard on Theron's heels, not in his towering rage
grasped the hair that spread down over Theron's milky neck
and savagely dragged him back. His rival impeded in this way
then Eurytus joyfully passed him, and sped on his way to claim
the prize and carry off the glittering helm, such a splendid gift.
And the rest of the youths were gifted the promised rewards,
their unshorn hair was crowned with garlands of green leaves
and each bore and brandished their javelins of Spanish steel.

The warriors next engaged in more serious strife, swords drawn
at close quarters, and simulacra of battle scenes were staged.
These men who matched sword on sword in equal combat were
inspired by manly virtue and a ferocious desire for the winning
of fame and reputation, not gladiators guilty of crime whose lives
were stained by vice. The spectacle was worthy of the Roman sons
of the war-god Mars and a re-presentation of their normal work.
Among these contestants were two brothers (What crimes have kings
not dared when a throne is at stake?) and, although the crowded stadium
condemned their madness, they entered the lists to fight for the crown.
This was their tribe's harsh custom: for brothers to hazard their lives
to compete in armoured combat for their dead father's dominions.
They met with all the rage that seems appropriate in those fired
by the hope of a throne. And both of the brothers fell together
and took hearts sated with overmuch blood to the land of shades
far below. With equal force the tips of their swords were thrust
deep within and through their chests and their vital parts.
Last curses were heaped on the fatal wounds, and cursing still
their harsh spirits fled into the unwelcoming breeze and airs.
Nor were their shades allowed peace! For when on one pyre
their corpses were being together consumed by a single flame,
that impious fire broke in two and their ashes refused to mix.
The rest of the competitors were rewarded with different gifts,

according to their courage and skills. Some led bullocks away
well trained to the ploughshare and so to cleaving the earth,
others young men drawn from the Moorish prisoners,
accustomed to and skilled at hunting wild beasts in their lairs.
Gifts too of silver and fine garments there were, horses of war
and helmets, crests erect and standing on their crowns, all taken
from the rich booty and spoil of the Libyan dead and prisoners.

And then it was the end of the games and five men sought to win
the glory of a triumph with the javelin, and make the winning cast
at the mark: and Burnus there was, a man of noble lineage, sent
from the Tagus' banks, whose waters run pale with golden sands.
Next Glagus, whose famous throwing arm outran the winds,
and the huntsman Aconteus, whose speeding javelin shafts
the nimble deer themselves could never fly from and escape.
And Indibilis too, a long time and cheerful opponent of Rome,
but now an ally, and Ilerdes, a warrior as well, whose javelins
were used to bring down the birds that sped through the clouds.
A serving girl skilled at colouring white wool with Gaetulian dye
was first prize and she was gifted to Burnus, whose javelin
transfixed the target through and through. Ilerdes' missile flew
very close to the target and he was happy to depart endowed
with the second prize, a young man whose sport was the chase
and to hunt down and capture each and all of the forest deer.
The noble Aconteus took third prize, a pair of hunting hounds
that were not afraid to drive out the wild boar with their bark.

When the public acclamation and loud applause had ratified
these awards the general's brother and Laelius, resplendent
in purple called on the great names of the dead and joyfully
summoned their ghosts and cast their spears. It pleased them
to celebrate the sacred ashes and so further dignify the games.
The general himself, his face betraying his joyous state of mind,
next repaid his faithful friends with gifts so very well deserved,
his brother's prize a corselet coated with multiple layers of gold,
while Laelius received a pairing of chariot horses, Asturian bred,
and then he stood tall and cast his spear with all of the strength
he could muster and stated that this was his tribute to the dead.
Mirabile dictu the swiftly speeding spear stopped in mid-flight
and plunged to the earth before their eyes and planted itself
in the plain. Then there were leaves and branches at once on high
and an oak tree born, providing from its birth a spread of shade.
The seers then bad Scipio strive for greater achievements still:
for the gods had foretold by this portent that such would come.

This prophecy made and the last of the Carthaginians driven out
from the western shore, then Scipio, avenger of Rome and his kin,
returned to Italy and his reputation preceded him in his triumph[15].

[15] There was no official Triumph since Scipio was not formally qualified, anticipating in some ways the career of Pompeius Magnus in the first century C.E.

And Latium burned with no more fiercely felt desire than to grant
the youthful Scipio the consulship and the care of provincial Africa.
The older generation of men, though, did not feel an equal passion
in their bellies and, wary of a war of dubious outcome, they vetoed
in their nervous dread any such extravagant enterprise or risk.

So when the noble consul, freshly appointed to his office, brought
his plans to the senate and asked that the power be granted him
to lay Carthage waste, then Fabius, elder statesman that he was,
stood up to speak and raised his voice to make his position clear,
"I am old enough, have won sufficient glory to feel no need for more
of years or reputation and so I can have no need to fear that Scipio
may believe that I speak in opposition to his glorious enterprise
in a spirit of jealous rivalry. My name is rendered glorious enough
that such a splendid past performance gained requires no more
embellishment. Yet while life remains it would be a wickedness
to fail my fatherland and criminalize my good name by silence.
Is it your intent to head fresh wars against the lands of Africa?
Is Italy lacking an enemy? To conquer Hannibal is surely enough
of a task for us? What greater glory than that can be pursued
on Dido's shores? If a passion for further triumphs is our goad,
then reap a closer harvest! Fortune has prepared an opponent
to challenge your skills nearer home! The soil of Italy desires,
desires at last to drink in the blood of that savage general!
Where would you drag your eagles and Mars himself? First douse
the flames in Italy! Would you so stray and leave an exhausted foe
behind and the seven hills of Rome betrayed and undefended?
And while you lay waste to the sterile sands of Syrtis will not
that dire plague attack the city walls of Rome he tested before,
invade the Capitoline hill of Jupiter, now bereft of all defenders
and its garrison? What a price he would pay for you to depart
and abandon Rome! Shall we recall you from the seas off Africa,
as Fulvius was recently recalled from the lofty towers of Capua[16],
when we have been smitten by Hannibal's thunderbolt of war?
Be victor here and with war purge Italy of fifteen years of grief
and death! Only then take your expeditionary force to the far
Garamantes to gain your triumphs over Nasamonian tribes.
The desperate straits of Italy currently forbid such escapades.
Your father, a man whose industry brought fresh honours
to your house, was on his way as consul to the Ebro's banks,
but recalled his legions and was the first to position himself
in Hannibal's path and confront him on his eager descent
from the conquered Alps. As consul yourself are you willing
to leave a victorious enemy in the field and by this "stratagem"
deliver us from the Carthaginian? For if he stays in place quite
undaunted and refuses to follow you and your troops to Libya,
you will condemn your improvident plans when Rome is took.
Suppose he does turn about in confusion and follow the sails
of your fleet, why surely he will be the very same Hannibal,

[16] See Bk. 12. 570.

the same whose camp you saw from the city walls of Rome."
So Fabius, and the older men waxed enthusiastic in support.

Then Scipio in reply, "When once two great hearted generals
were slain together and when the whole of the land of Spain
was occupied and submitted itself to the Carthaginian yoke,
it was not Fabius nor any of those who harbour similar views
who came to their aid, but it was I - of tender years I confess –
who took upon myself the cloud of war and alone confronted
the fall of heaven and took upon myself all the risks of war.
Then too the elders chanted the folly of trusting command
to a youth, while this man sang prophecies of foolhardiness.
Myself I sing thankful praises to the deities under whose rule
we Romans survive. For that under aged and feckless boy,
a tenderfoot in war and unfit as yet to be called to arms,
that Scipio restored the land of Spain to the people of Rome,
was undefeated, expelled the Carthaginians and followed
the sun's extreme course beside Gibraltar, drove the name
of Libya from Europe's western marches, did not withdraw
his banners from the land before he saw Phoebus[17]unyoke
his steaming chariot team beside the sea on a Roman shore.
Kings too Scipio recruited. Carthage alone remains as our
last task and finally our work is done. For Jupiter, father
of eternal life, advises me so. Look, old men shudder when
they think of Hannibal, or they merely simulate sick fears
so that I may not at length win the distinction of bringing
an end to years of disaster. My right hand is practised now
and we have increased the strength of our youthful years.
So conjure no more delays, but allow the destiny the gods
have preserved for me to run its course and eradicate
the memories of past defeats. There was sufficient glory
for Fabius the Circumspect in avoiding defeat. He spared
us disaster by his delays. Nor Mago nor Hanno nor Gisgo's
nor Hamilcar's sons[18], would have shown me their backs
had I campaigned in idleness from within a closed off camp.
Was not the Carthaginian boy, scarce grown from puberty,
quite capable of invading Italy, of attacking the city walls
of Rome and the sacred Tiber's yellow stream, of feeding on
the fields of Latium through seeming endless years of war?
So shall *we* hesitate to transport our troops across to Libya
and rattle the Carthaginian cage? Their wide and open shores
are free from peril, their territories remaining rich with all
the quiet benefits of peace. Let Carthage, wont to be feared,
at last feel fear herself and come to understand that we still
have armies left, though Italy is not yet freed from Hannibal.
That man whom your cautious stratagem of procrastination
has allowed to grow old in Italy and generously there decant
our land's life blood, that man I will despatch anxious home,
in a fever of fear that he returns too late to save a homeland

[17] The Sun-God.
[18] The two Hasdrubals.

consumed by flames. Or shall Rome bear witness to the foul
marks printed on her city walls by the handiwork of Hannibal,
shall Carthage herself, unscathed and immune from terror,
ascertain of our woes, while waging war with open gates?
Indeed then let our perfidious foe pound our battlements
again with the Punic ram, should he not hear the shrines
of his own folk crackle before that time in Roman flames."
These words ignited the senators and, following the call
of Fate, complied with the consul's words, then prayed
for a fair result for Italy and handed him the reins of war.

Punica: Book 17

Silius Italicus

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Punica, Book 17

The image of Cybele is carried from Phrygia to Rome and welcomed at Ostia by P. Scipio Nasica: Claudia's chastity is vindicated (1-45). *Scipio sails to Africa* (46-58) *and advises Syphax not to break faith with Rome. The African's camp is burned and the king taken prisoner* (59-145). *Hasdrubal retreats to Carthage and Hannibal is recalled from Italy* (146-157). *Hannibal dreams before the summons arrives* (158-169). *Although he leaves Italy in obedience to the summons he decides to return, but is prevented by a storm at sea* (170-291). *In Africa at last he exhorts his troops* (292-337). *Jupiter and his consort Juno discuss the fate of Hannibal* (338-384). *The final battle: Zama* (385-617). *Scipio returns in triumph to Rome* (618-654).

In order that a foreign enemy might depart the shores of Italy
the ancient oracles of the prophetic Sibyl had declared that the men
of Rome must invite the sacred Mother of the Gods[1] from her home
in Phrygia inside the walls of Rome itself and be worshipped there.
That man must greet the goddess on her arrival whom the senate
agreed unanimously was the most pious of the present generation
in Rome. A title better and more prestigious than any triumph!
And so Cybele was invited and now approached the Latin shore
in a Roman ship. The total senate then in unison gave way to Scipio
who made haste to welcome the coming of the Phrygian deity.
This man was a cousin of the Scipio just chosen to lead in the war
against Carthage, and he shone as a member of a long and noble line.
This Scipio welcomed the goddess on her arrival from her long
sea voyage, his hands uplifted as of a suppliant, and standing tall
he brought her ship to the sounding mouth of the Tuscan river Tiber.
A group of women then undertook to haul the goddess' tall ship
upriver to her anchorage with mooring ropes held in their hands.
All around was the hollow clash of cymbals and at the same time
the clattering tambourines competed cacophonous with their din,
while present too were her band of eunuchs, demi-men who lived
about the twin sacred peaks of Dindyma and indulged their Bacchic
rites, revelling in Dicte's caves and know Ida's sacred silent groves.
In the midst all this frenzied din and prayer and joyful tumult
the sacred ship beached itself hard and fast on a sudden shoal,
refused to proceed or respond to the compelling pull of the ropes.
Then from the waist of the vessel a priest gave out a great cry,
"Do not pollute the sacred ropes with hands that are unclean!
Away from here, I say, away from here all ye that are profane,
avert your steps and take no further part in this sacred task,
the while the goddess merely warns! But if any woman here
is secure in her chastity of heart and knows full well her body
is immaculate, let her alone take on the task with pious hand."

[1] See Duff's note *ad loc.* "Cybele, the Great Mother, was the chief deity of Asia Minor; and her image, a square block of stone that had fallen from heaven, was kept at Pessinus, an ancient city of Galatia. This stone the Romans now imported. The oracle of Delphi required that the goddess should be welcomed to Rome by the most virtuous Roman; and P. Cornelius Scipio Nasica, a youthful son of Cn. Scipio who had fallen in Spain, was chosen by the Senate to perform this duty."

Here Claudia, whose reputation was marred by spiteful gossip,
although she could trace back her name to the venerable line
of the Clausi[2], turned her hands and gaze to the ship and spoke,
"O Mother of the gods, divine Cybele, parent of all our deities,
whose children cast lots for government and now rule earth
and sea, both the stars in the sky and the spirits of the dead,
if my body is free of any crime, if indeed I am inviolate, come,
bear witness and let the boat's freed passage absolve my name!"
She confidently seized the rope and of a sudden one seemed
to hear the roaring of lions[3] and Cybele's louder tambourines
assailed our ears the more and there was no hand to beat them!
The ship sailed on an even keel (you'd think a breeze had arisen)
and against the current overhauled the woman as she towed.
At once a greater hope inspired and cheered the hearts of all:
an end at last to warfare, an end to the perils besetting Rome!

Next Scipio himself departed from the land of Sicily in haste[4]
and his convoy of ships made dark the sea as they progressed.
With a sacrificial bull he had placated Neptune, god of the sea,
and the innards were thrown to swim on the sea's blue waves.
Then from the seat of the gods and gliding through the clear
blue sky the pinioned armour bearers of Jupiter[5] were seen
to make clear the route across the sea and to guide the fleet.
Their cries were thought auspicious. The flight of the birds
in the clear airs beneath the cloud was followed at just such
a distance as would not frustrate the watch-keepers' gaze,
until at last they gained the perfidious Carthaginian shores.

Nor was Africa quiescent in the face of such a gathering storm,
but had acquired the wealth of a king[6] and Massylian warriors
to counter the dreadful host and its illustrious leader, Scipio.
For Syphax was the Carthaginians' sole hope and the sole cause
of terror to the Roman troops. The Numidians riding bareback
as was their custom filled both the plains and spreading valleys,
the sea-shores alike and with thick clouds of javelins that sped
upon the breezes they concealed from sight the very sky itself.
For forgetful of right hands clasped and an alliance sworn
before the gods, of right and wrong and the bonds of hospitality
shared, Syphax, his heart and soul distorted by lust unrestrained,
had broken his oath and sold his crown to gain a marriage bed.
The maid was exceedingly fair and of impeccable parentage[7],
the daughter of Hasdrubal and as soon as Syphax received
his bride into his lofty wedding suite, as if for the first time lit

[2] The famous Claudian family was allegedly founded by Attus Clausus, supposedly of Spartan descent, but from the territory of the Sabines, see Bk. 8. 412ff and 466.
[3] Cybele was often depicted in art as sitting in a chariot drawn by lions.
[4] Scipio had been apportioned Sicily as his province with permission to advance against Africa at his discretion.
[5] The eagle is one of the characteristic attendants of Jupiter.
[6] Syphax.
[7] Her name was Sophonisba, daughter of Hasdrubal, son of Gisco.

by the fires of a nuptial torch, he bestowed his wealth and arms
upon Hasdrubal and broke his treaty of friendship with Rome.

However, the Roman general took the greatest of pains to give
Syphax fair warning, dispatching both messengers and threats:
he should stay at home, regard the gods and keep his promises!
His bride and Carthaginian marriage rites would be of little help
indeed amidst the Roman battle line! The price of this passionate
amour and wedding match for the far too compliant and fawning,
uxorious husband would, of course, be paid for in full with blood.

These threats and admonitions of Scipio were both alike in vain,
for the bride had blocked and deafened her consort's ears.
And so Scipio, enraged that his urgent advice had failed his need,
declared war and, calling to witness the sacred treaty betrayed,
he urgently began the campaign, deploying varied stratagems.
The enemy camp was built up of light woven rushes and reeds,
just like the scattered huts enamoured of the Moorish herdsmen,
so Scipio made his attack under the sheltering cover of night
and, undetected in the silent dark scattered blazing firebrands.
Next when the conflagration began rapidly to spread its threat
and loudly crackling through the rich provender there[8]
the bright wind-blown flames illumined the sky and drove
dark clouds of smoke before their swift and flickering front.
The deadly scourge made its twisting path through all the camp,
and Vulcan, god of fire, then feasted with a breathless roar on his
dry food, while the flames flowed down from every wicker roof.
The fire was felt by many roused from sleep before they saw
the flames themselves, which choked off the cries of many men
calling out for help. Mulciber, the god of fire, spread everywhere
in triumph and seized both men and arms in his swift embrace.
The dreadful fire overflowed in all directions and the burnt
out camp, now pallid ashes, drifted through the topmost clouds.
The firestorm then engulfed the tent and quarters of the king
himself and with a mighty leap now crackled doom for him,
would have consumed the king had not an anxious attendant
amidst the calamity snatched him cursing from bed and sleep.

But when soon the Massylian and Carthaginian generals
had joined their forces, fresh troops were levied from all
the kingdom to redeem the losses of that fateful night.
Then rage and shame and his bride, a third burning motive,
inspired a monstrous passion. He made the direst threats
and gnashed his teeth - his face was singed by flames
in the burning camp! He had only just been snatched away
from the foe, stark naked through the confused ranks
of his troops! No man could conquer Syphax in the bright
light of day with the sun god looking on to bear witness!
Such arrogant boasts! But Atropos[9] was soon to end his pride,

[8] Like a ravening beast the fire consumes the flammable material of the encampments huts.
[9] With Clotho and Lachesis on of the three Fates who both span and cut the thread of human life.

to close his mouth, sever the thread of that bombastic tongue.
For when he sped from the camp like a turbulent stream
which, dragging logs and rocks in its train, rolls headlong
along paths unknown and overflows its bank in foaming flood,
he rode his horse in the van and loudly urged his men on.
Confronting him was the dynamic Roman infantry and when
the king was seen afar the cavalry armed themselves and charged.
Each said to himself, "Do you see? Do you see how Syphax flies
in the very front rank, the king himself demanding a battle.
Ensure, right hand, the prize[10] is ours! He has fouled the shrines
of the gods, has broken his treaty with our impeccable general.
Let it be sufficient for him to have escaped the flaming camp!"
Such their silent thoughts as they competitively cast their spears,
the first of which flew to lodge itself in the steaming nostril
of the king's warhorse and caused that beast to rear and beat
the breezes with uplifted hooves, its nose all run with blood.
The savage beast then took a heavy fall and shaking from side
to side its wounded head it betrayed its rider to his enemies.
They moved in in him as he tried in vain to flee and seized
him straining to lift his injured limbs and withdraw the spear
from the wound. Next chains and manacles were fixed on him,
a sorry sight, and (an object lesson to never trust prosperity!)
they tightly bound the royal hands that once the sceptre bore.
Cast down from the lofty peak of kingship he was led away,
a man who recently seen the world and kings at his feet,
holding sway over the sea as far as the Ocean's far shore.
The king's power overthrown the Carthaginian rank and file
were harvested, and Hasdrubal, disdained by Mars and prone
to flight, turned tail once more, his endeavours all abandoned.

Carthage still stood, but all her supportive limbs were lopped off
and the absent Hannibal alone through reputation sustained her.
Their desperation demanded that he, their final hope of succour,
should rouse their flagging spirits and bring them aid and a wealth
of resources. In their panic the citizens now fled at last to Hannibal,
once they had understood that the gods above had abandoned them.
At once a ship was launched to cleave the ocean's saline wastes,
with couriers to summon him *instanter*, telling of desperate times
and if too late he might well see the walls of Carthage destroyed.

Aurora's fourth day had brought the vessel to the shores of Italy,
and fearsome dreams were sorely disturbing the sleep of Hannibal.
For while at night, weighed down with cares, he snatched at rest,
he had a vision and seemed to sees Flaminius and Gracchus
and Paulus, their swords all drawn, making a combined assault
against him, intent on driving the Carthaginian out of Italy's land.
The whole army of ghosts from both Cannae and Lake Trasimene
were marching, intent on driving his troops back into the sea.
Himself, intent on flight, now sought to retrace his path across

[10] The fame of killing the enemy's general in the engagement.

the familiar Alps, but, while yet he clung by fingertip to the soil
of Italy, the savage pressure of his enemies in pursuit now drove
him into the sea, made a gift of him to the storms to carry him off.

The envoys came to Hannibal while he was plagued by these dreams
and brought him their news, revealing the direst danger to Carthage,
how the military forces of Massylia were overthrown, how Syphax,
the king of Libya, wore chains about his neck, and, his death denied,
was kept to grace Scipio's triumphal march to Jupiter's Capitoline home,
how Carthage was in strife, stunned, broken by the frequent cowardice
of Hasdrubal, who held the reins of government. They had seen,
they said in sorrowful tones, two camps ablaze in the silent night
and all of Africa's land illumined with sacrilegious flames. Young Scipio
was lightning fast and threatened that while Hannibal still delayed
on Bruttian shores he would obliterate his native land with flames
atrocious – and so no home for his return, despite his glorious works.
And when they had delivered this news and made clear the sorry state
of Carthage, they wept and kissed his hand as though he were a god.

And Hannibal heard grim faced and careworn, inwardly pondering
in his heart if Carthage was worth so much and finally he replied
in these words, "How dire the fate of mortal men! Since jealousy
curtails ever the growth of fame and reputation and never allows
men grant us the great praise we have deserved! Long since I could
have sacked and extirpated Rome, laid that city low and level
with the soil of Latium, led her people prisoners under the yoke
of servitude, subjected them to the dictates of Carthaginian law.
For while Carthage refused me cash and arms when I was general,
to reinforce my men, exhausted by success, with fresh recruits,
while Hanno even chose to defraud my troops of corn and food,
the whole of Africa has been engulfed in a conflagration dire
and the Roman javelin pounds on the gates of Carthage herself!
Now Hannibal though is the city's solitary ornament and source
of salvation. Its final hope rests now in Hannibal's right hand!
My troops will turn about as the elders have decreed and they
and I together will save the city walls and save you Hanno, too."

When he had thundered so and launched his tall warships
from the shore, he set out to sea with many an inward groan.
None dared to attack the departing fleet's rear-guard nor yet
recall the warrior. All seemed to believe it a gift of the gods
that he had chosen to leave and at last had set free the soil
of Italy. They prayed for winds and it was sufficient to see
the shoreline free of enemy troops. So, when the south wind
becalms her savage blasts and leaving reopens now the sea
for trade, the mariner does not demand a following wind
as he prays, but is content that the storm is gone and thinks
the calm sufficient for safe voyaging. The Carthaginian troops
all bent their gaze upon the seas that lay ahead, but Hannibal
intently fixed his eyes upon the diminishing shores of Italy,
while copious flowing streams of tears in silence bedewed

his cheeks and his body was ever wracked with frequent sighs,
as if he were an exile being dragged to hostile foreign shores,
abandoning perforce his home and beloved household gods.

Then as the winds increased and his ships began to make way
and the mainland hills began clearly to fade in the distance,
when Italy at last was gone and Daunus' land quite lost to view,
he gnashed his teeth in private angst, "Am I sound of mind,
do I not deserve this present return, I who never should
have abandoned Italy's shores? I had rather Carthage burned,
was torched and that Dido's name had been forever forgot!
Was I sound of mind when I did not bring my flaming spears
from Cannae to the temples of the Capitol and hurl down Jove
from his throne? I should have scattered fire-brands across
the seven undefended hills, have gifted that arrogant race
the fate of Troy and the fatal destruction of their ancestors.
Why should these things torture *me*? Who stops me now, sword
in hand, from invasion, a second march on the walls of Rome?
I shall return, retrace my steps across the remains of my camp.
A familiar path recalls me and I will revisit the Anio's stream.
Redirect our course to Italy and turn our fleet of ships about!
I shall ensure that Rome under siege will soon call Scipio back."

While Hannibal burned with rage, from the depths Neptune saw
the ships change course, observed them turn back to the shore,
and, shaking his turquoise head of hair, he awakened the seas
from below and swept the swollen waves up and beyond the beach.
At once he roused the winds and squalls of rain from the rugged cave
of Aeolus and obscured the heavens with serried ranks of cloud.
Next wielding his trident he stirred his kingdom's innermost parts,
exciting the sea from the dawning east to the sunset west to raise
tempestuous waves across the deep's entirety. The whitecaps rose
in foam and each and every rock shook with the shock of waves.
The cloudy South-wind first roused itself in Nasimonian lands
then seized control of the Syrtis' streams and laid bare its sands.
The North-wind took its turn and carried on night-black wings
the waters scoured from the sea. The black East-wind thundered,
a discordant note, and stole for itself its own share of the deep.
The ruptured skies roared at the hiss and blast of lightning bolts,
an implacable sky roared down on Hannibal's company of ships.
A fiery inferno of clouds and the sea's stormy waves and a rage
of winds conspired to shadow the sea in a darkness as of night.
Then see! A blast of wind from the south pooped Hannibal's ship,
made hum the yards while the rigging screamed under strain
and a rogue and mountainous wave rose from the dark depths
to hang above and break over the fearful Carthaginian's head.
He cried aloud as his wandering gaze took in both sea and sky,
"So lucky, brother Hasdrubal, an equal of the gods in your death,
and fortunate! A brave and noble end for you to die at the hand
of a warrior in the battle's heat and to be granted by the Fates
to taste the soil of Italy's land as you made your final paroxysm.

But I was not allowed to breathe my last on Cannae's battlefield,
where Paulus and many another noble warrior fell, or be sent
to the world of the dead, struck down by the thunderbolt of Jove,
when I came and brought fire-brands against Rome's Capitol."

While Hannibal grieved, twin waves compounded by rival gusts
of wind assailed both sides of his vessel's hull and sank the stern
beneath the dark and massy sea, as if drowned by a typhoon's blast.
Expelled upwards then in swirling vortices of black sand the ship
revealed itself once more to the breezes and the ethereal skies,
and hung atop the waves, now balanced by the opposing winds,
but by a cruel stroke of luck the South–wind ran two more warships
aground on an unforgiving rock strewn reef, a wretched tragedy.
They struck and the prows ground out a complaint, so the ships
broke up on the jagged rocks, their hulls splintered and breached.
And here was a varied sight to see: upon the surface of the sea
there swam an armoury of warriors' helms and scarlet crests,
the gorgeous spoils of Capua's glory days, and Italy's booty, all
kept for Hannibal's triumph, both tripods and tables of the gods,
and images worshipped worthlessly by the Romans in despair.
Then Venus, appalled by the face of the stormy sea, addressed
king Neptune so, "My lord, your rage has been assuaged
enough by now, your threats may well suffice for larger projects.
I beg you, spare the sea further pain lest cruel Carthage claims
she had produced a noble son, a man invincible in any war,
and my Aeneadae, my sons required your help, the help
of the sea's deep and all its waves to put an end to Hannibal."
So Venus spoke and the swell of the turbid waves grew calm.[11]
and they advanced their forces towards the enemy camp.

The veteran Hannibal was well versed in inflaming the hearts
of his troops with praise and with a fiery speech he stirred
them heart and soul to passionate rage and glorious intent,
"*You* brought me the dripping head of the Roman general
Flaminius – I know that warrior hand! *You* were the first
to charge and strike at mighty Paulus, thrusting your sword
to the bone. The spoils of pugnacious Marcellus were won
by *you*. And Gracchus fell to wet *your* sword with his blood.
Behold the hand which from the very topmost battlements
of the city delivered the spear which laid you low, when you
were battering the walls of lofty Capua, warmonger Appius!
And see! Another hand with the speed of light from which
the nobly named Fulvius took multiple wounds to his chest.
You take your place in the foremost line at whose hands
the consul Crispinus fell in battle. While *you*, companion me

[11] There seems to be a lacuna here in the text: cf, Duff's note *ad loc*. "That some verses, perhaps a great many verses, have been lost here seems to me certain. For the present episode is not completed; and the following episode requires introductory matter which is lacking. There is no other instance in the poem of narrative so faulty. Further, it is known that Scipio and Hannibal met in conference before the battle; and it is inconceivable that Silius should pass over an incident so dramatic."

through the ranks of the foe. I remember that in joyous rage
you brought me the general Servilius' head fixed on your pike.
I see *your* flaming eyes and expression no less to be feared
than your sword, the bravest young warrior that I have seen
among the Carthaginians when in the noble Trebia's wild
stream, clasping a Roman tribune in your powerful arms,
you drowned him in the depths for all his fruitless toils.
And *you*, who, beside the frigid waters of Ticinus' flow
first tinted your sword with the elder Scipio's life-blood[12],
complete your quest! Bring me the bloody body of the son!
Shall I dread a confrontation with the very gods themselves
in battle, when you stand firm, my friends, men whom I saw
tread peaks that bordered heaven and traverse the Alps,
when I saw the wide and expansive plains of Diomedes' town[13].
in flames at your hands and arms. *You* too, will *you* be any less
proactive in my cause, who hurled the first spear against
the walls of Rome, unwilling even to grant precedence to me?
And do I need indeed to drive *you* on, who when I was faced
the thunderheads and lightning bolts and all of heaven's show
of rage, you bad me dismiss the vainglorious clatter of clouds
and sought to reach the Capitol before your general himself?
What need to goad you more by whose expertise Saguntum
was sacked to bring you fame in the first campaign of the war?
Fight hard to preserve your reputation won! Be worthy of me,
of yourselves! I have myself, through favour divine, grown old
and victorious and after thrice five years now seek to return
to my fatherland in its distress, and see my home not seen
for an age, my son and the face of my long-time faithful wife,
and I put my trust in you. For Carthage now cannot sustain
a further battle, nor yet can the senate and people of Rome.
Our struggle today is to decide who is master of the world."
So Hannibal, but as often as Scipio prepared himself to address
his men, they could not endure the delay caused by a speech
and besought the general to give the signal for waging war.

When Jupiter observed his dear consort watching these events
from a lofty distant cloud and saw her penetrating gaze and sad
expression, he spoke to her then in the friendliest of tones,
"What cares consume your thoughts? Allow me, wife, to know.
Surely not the fate of general Hannibal and of your beloved city
of Carthage? Ponder, turn your inner thoughts upon the rabid
stupidity of the Carthaginians! What limit, sister, will there be
to broken treaties, of rebellion against Rome and its destiny
of world dominion? Carthage herself has not suffered more pain
has not expended more effort than you your own self have spent,
have undergone in your efforts to succour this city of Cadmus.
You confounded land and sea, despatched a savage young man

[12] The elder Scipio survived the battle, rescued by his son.
[13] See Duff's note *ad loc*, "[Argyripa] An ancient city of Apulia, also called Arpi, said to have been founded by Diomede. It suffered from Hannibal in 217 B.C."

against the city of Rome, whose city walls were set atremble.

Through twice eight years now Hannibal has been the foremost
of humankind. The time has come at last to reconcile hostilities.
We have come to the end! We now must close the gates of war!"

Then Juno made her plea, "I have not sat upon this hanging cloud
in an effort to change what will happen on this appointed day.
I do not seek to recall the battle lines nor extend hostilities.
I simply ask what is in your power to grant since my influence
is not what it was and your first passion for me has cooled –
The Fates have spun their thread… Let Hannibal turn his back
to the foe, let the remnants of Troy's fall now rule in Carthage!
However, this one boon I beg of you as both sister and spouse,
by our twofold bond: allow great-hearted Hannibal to survive
the perils of battle, keep the Carthaginian general alive and safe.
Do not let him be captured and suffer the manacles of Rome.
And also let stand my battered city walls, although the fame
of Carthage is broken, let the walls still stand to honour me!"

So Juno had made her plea and Jupiter began his terse reply,
"As you request, I will grant the walls of lofty Carthage a stay
of execution, let them stand in answer to your tearful prayers.
Learn though, wife, the scale of my powers to please. The span
allotted Carthage is not long, and another general will come,
another Scipio who will sack utterly the citadels now secure[14].
According to your pleas, though, Hannibal will escape the fray
to breathe free air. He will wish to confound again both sea
and stars and fill the earth once more with battles re-joined.
I know the fellow's fevered warlike heart, but let this coda
constrain my kindness: he may no more look upon the realm
of Saturn[15], must never ever endeavour to make a return
to Italy. Snatch him now from the threat of imminent death,
since, if he chooses to trade blows on the battle's broad field,
he may find himself unable to elude the sword hand of Scipio."

Almighty Jupiter so disposed the fate of the man and the state,
and the forces engaged in battle, assailing the stars themselves
with their din. The earth had never before been witness to strife
between such mighty states, and led to battle by greater generals
than Scipio and Hannibal. The ultimate prize at hazard for them
was nothing less than all the territory that lay beneath the sky.
The Carthaginian general advanced resplendent in a purple robe,
while a scarlet crest of nodding plumes enhanced his height
still more. The savage terror inspired by his proud reputation
preceded him and his sword infamous in Latium gleamed.
In contrast Scipio was radiant in robes of a brilliant scarlet hue,
displaying his dreaded shield, on which were graven images

[14] See Duff's note *ad loc*, "In 146 B.C. Carthage was destroyed by P. Cornelius Scipio Aemilianus, the younger Africanus, a grandson by adoption, of the elder Africanus."
[15] Italy.

of both his father and uncle together and breathing the breath
of battle dire. His helmet reflected from on high the fiery sun.
Despite the massive forces gathered of men and armaments,
all hope of victory rested solely on the shoulders of the generals.
In fact the troops were so swayed by a mix of fear and faith
in their leaders that they believed if Scipio had been born
on African shores world rule would have come to Agenor's[16] line,
but had in turn Hannibal been born a son of Italy's land,
they doubted not the world would live under Roman laws.

The very skies pulsated as whirring javelins were hurled forth
with turbine speed, creating a death dealing cloud of weaponry –
and then the sword and close quarter's work, men fronting men
in hand to hand combat their eyes ablaze with coruscating fire.
A host, contemptuous of the risk, that hurled itself first headlong
against the front rank of opposing pikes was all laid low in death
and all unwilling mother earth imbibed the blood of her own kin.
Hot blooded in youth and fervent too in his intent then Masinissa,
immense in stature, charged the first rank of Macedonian horse
and circled the battlefield with his flying troop of javelineers.
This far-northern warrior, decked out in woad, engages himself
and circles the dense packed ranks in his scythe armed chariot.
The Grecian phalanx had drawn itself up in its customary close
formation and now stood, an impenetrable line of men and pikes.
For Philip[17] had ignored his treaty made and sent these troops
in an attempt to revivify the tottering city of the Carthaginians.
Exhausted by constant attacks and their ranks growing thin
there opened up between the spears and fallen soldiers broad
paths. Roman troops rushed in *en masse*, a destructive force,
and totally disrupted the formations of perfidious Greeks.
Archemorus was slain by Rutilus, Teucer by Norbanus (both
young men sent in by Mantua, their common place of birth),
the good right hand of Calenus killed Samius and Selius slew
proud Clytius, who boasted in vain the glory of his home-town
of Pella, but Pella's repute had not the power to defend
its poor wretch against the spears of Roman warriors.

More savage than even these, Roman Laelius laid waste
the Bruttian ranks[18], and railed against them, "Was Italy
so detested by you that you fled across the storming seas,
through maddening waves in the ships of a Punic fleet?
Sufficient surely merely to flee? Is it your intent as well
to make the soil of a foreign land flow with Roman blood?"
As so he spoke his spear anticipated Silarus' thoughts
of attack. The flying shaft lodged in his victim's throat
and at once shut off both life and powers of speech.
Caudinus was laid low by Vergilius and Laüs was slain

[16] I.e. the Carthaginians.
[17] Philip the Fifth of Macedon had sent 4000 men and funds to help Carthage, despite his treaty with Rome.
[18] Conscripted by Hannibal in Italy.

by Amanus. The Romans' passion was the more inflamed
by a common tongue and by arms and complexion shared.
When Hannibal saw them display their backs in flight,
"Stand fast!" he cried, "Do not betray our common cause!"
And his inspiring presence there turned the battle's tide,
just as upon the scorching Garamantian plains the asp,
that Egyptian snake, nurtured on the noisome sands,
lifts high its neck and, with venom swollen full, spits out
a noxious dose of liquid toxin to poison the clouded sky.
Then Hannibal intercepted Herius, a nobleman, whose home
was Marrucina, and also the famous settlement of Teate,
just as he was aiming a deadly attack with his sharp spear,
and was striving mightily and buoyed by his enemy's fame -
but the Carthaginian buried his sword to the hilt in his side.
The wretch tried to seek out his brother Pleminius with his
last gaze, and young Pleminius, crazed by the bitter death
of a brother, brandished his brutal sword in Hannibal's face,
demanded his brother's corpse with loud shouts and threats,
to which Hannibal replied, "If in truth it pleases you to return
my dead brother, I will give him up! Our agreement stands,
if you can recall Hasdrubal from hell! Am I ever to set aside
my hatred for the men of Rome? Shall I permit my heart
to weaken? Shall I spare any warrior begotten and reared
by Italy's land? If so then let my brother unfriendly thrust
my spirit from his eternal seat and his company in Avernus!"
So Hannibal spoke and with the driving weight of his shield
he smashed him down where the footing, slick with blood
and treacherous, deceived him, and attacked with the sword.
Pleminius fell, stretched out his hands to embrace the corpse
of Herius and their union in death mitigated grief and pain.
Then Hannibal plunged into the heart of the confused fray,
and charging deep he then turned and put the foe to flight,
as when the thunder and lightning bolts shock the earth
and Jupiter's high halls themselves are shaken, the whole
of humankind is terrified across the globe. The fierce light plays
in their faces and each and every man believes that Jupiter
stands present before him and he is the lightning's choice.

Elsewhere, as if the sole site of battle on the field was where
Scipio drove ahead and waged implacable ferocious war,
the savagery of the fighting presented divers images
and forms of death. For here a man lay felled by the sword,
here one wept piteously, bones broken by a massive stone,
some terror induced disgracefully to fall and hide their face,
while others bravely offered their breasts to fatal Mars.
The Roman general himself marched on across the fallen dead,
as Mars, erect in his chariot makes the frozen Hebrus shake
and rejoicing melts the Thracian snows with fetid gore,
while his chariot, groaning beneath the bellicose deity's weight,
cracks packed ice driven now before the frigid northerlies.
And Scipio surveys with burning ire the victims of his sword,

all the bravest and best. Troops renowned across the world,
notorious for slaughter fell and lie amid the carnage here:
the men who seized your city walls, Saguntum, and wrought
wretched ruin to provide a pretext for an abominable war,
who fouled your sacred lake, Trasimene, polluted the pools
of Phaëthon's stream[19] with gore, those whose huge self belief
persuaded them to march upon the temple of Jove himself,
intent on sacking his temple. All slain in close quarter affray,
all equally doomed! Those also breathed their last who claimed
they had defiled the fastnesses of the gods, had first traversed
the Alps, forbidden to humankind. The Carthaginians ridden
with fearful guilt all lost their minds and turned tail in flight.
Just so when Vulcan's pestilential fire consumes a city's roofs
and a speeding gale fans the flames and spreads far and wide
the conflagration above the house tops, engulfing all the city:
in sudden dread the horrified population everywhere erupts,
quite terrified as if their city had been captured by some foe.

However, Scipio was tired of further delay, of being embroiled
in giving chase to lesser adversaries across the field of battle
and it pleased him to turn his strength against the cause
of the war, the author of its woes. For while Hannibal
alone survived there would be no gain for Rome, if the walls
of Carthage were consumed by fire and all her armies slain
in total defeat. And yet should Hannibal fall himself, then all
her arms and men could not advantage Carthage in the least.
His gaze therefore swept the battlefield as he strove to find
the general. It pleased him now swiftly to proceed and engage
the final confrontation. His desperate need to come face
to face with the foe, all Italy looking on and standing erect
he fiercely cried aloud, dared Hannibal to fight him afresh.

When Juno heard Scipio's challenge so voiced she was filled
with fear lest these cries reached fearless Hannibal's ears
and so in haste she created a facsimile of the Roman general,
and crowned it with a glittering plume and crest, adding shield
and helm of Scipio and placed upon its shoulders his mark
of office, the scarlet robe. She gave it the gait and battle style
of Scipio and despite its insubstantial nature his warlike tread.
She gave the phantom warrior next a similarly phantom steed,
a mount, a phantasmagorical horse for this ersatz Scipio
to guide at the gallop over the rough ground of the battlefield.
This false Scipio, Juno's make believe creation, pranced before
the eyes of Hannibal, brandishing its arms before the general.
When Hannibal saw the Roman general apparently before him,
the Carthaginian rejoiced and hoping at last for mightier fame,
he swiftly thrust his limber arms across the back of his horse
and hurled his spear against his enemy with whirlwind speed.
The phantom turned tail and fled the field on wings of fear

[19] The River Po.

along the battle lines. Hannibal then, as though victorious
already and assured of his desires, made bloody the flanks
of his horse in pursuit and fiercely plied and shook the reins.
"So whither, Scipio? Remember! You flee here in my domain!
There is no safe hiding place for you on our Carthaginian soil."
He spoke and drew his sword and pursued his flying prey,
until it led him all frustrated into tracts of land far removed
from the field of battle where the contest was to be decided.
The imitation Scipio then vanished quite, into the clouds –
and the Carthaginian thundered, "Which god has so cloaked
his divinity competing with me? Why does he hide behind
this phantom? Does my fame and glory so offend the gods?
Whichever of you that dwells in heaven and so favours Rome,
you never will by your dark arts rob me, strip away from me
my rightful victim." Furiously he hauled on his horse's reins
and turned its head and sought again to find the battlefield,
when of a sudden stricken by some secret pestilence, a trick
contrived by Juno, his brave horse shuddered and collapsed,
breathing its life's last panting breath into the receiving air.
Then Hannibal could suffer no more, "This is another of your
tricks, gods!" he said, "You cannot fool me! I would the rocks
had drowned me deep, the waves and sea had swallowed me!
Was I preserved for such a fate? The men who followed my
colours, whom I led into this war are being butchered - and me
not there… I hear their cries and groans as call on me for help,
on Hannibal! What stream of Tartarus will sufficiently wash
away this guilt of mine?" And even as he poured out this cry
of shame, he eyed the sword in his hand and longed for death.

Then Juno took pity on the warrior and putting on the form
of a shepherd she sudden emerged from the darkling woods
and addressed him so, as he contemplated a shameful death,
"What reason has compelled you, a man fully armed, to come
to our woodland retreat? Are you making your way perhaps
to the dreadful battle where great Hannibal tames at last
the forces of Rome? If speed is your desire and a swift march
your choice, I will lead you to the battle by a nearby path."
He nodded and promised to reward the shepherd's charity
with weighty gifts and said the senators of lofty Carthage
would pay him well, and he would match their generosity.
He then raced away and with heroic strides traversed
the nearby plain, but Juno, leading him a roundabout route,
deceived him to keep him ungraciously safe against his will.

Meanwhile the Carthaginian forces, abandoned and filled
with dread, saw neither Hannibal himself, nor any evidence
of his dire leadership. Some thought him dead by the sword,
some that he had despaired of victory, lost faith in hostile gods.
The Roman general advanced and drove his enemies in flight
across the plain. Already the very citadels of Carthage trembled
and all Africa was filled with rampant terror at her armies' rout,

as their men, no thoughts of fighting more, in headlong flight
rushed, seeking to make their panic stricken course to far
flung shores, some scattering to flee as far away as Spain.
Some sought the city of Cyrene, some the waters of the Nile.
Just as when Vesuvius at length a victim of powers unseen
spews fires to the stars, fires fed deep within for centuries,
and his pestilential flames erupt to assault both land and sea,
when the Chinese in the east behold – incredible phenomenon! -
their silk bearing trees grow snowy white with Italian ash.

At last the queen of heaven Juno set the wearied Hannibal
upon a nearby hillock, an all encompassing vantage point,
whence he was vividly shown the wretched battle's close.
As once he had seen Cannae's field and the marsh of Trebia,
the waters of Lake Trasimene and the stream of Phaëthon[20],
awash with Roman dead, so now – a pitiful sight – he saw
the dreadful vista revealed of a field of Carthaginians slain.
Then Juno returned disgruntled to her heavenly home.
By now the Roman foe drew close to the hill where he sat
and Hannibal pondered within, "Should the cosmos' frame
itself collapse and crash upon my head, should the earth
itself be split apart, you will never ever eradicate Cannae
from history, Jupiter, and you will fall from your throne
before my reputation, race and deeds shall ever silent be.
Nor do I leave Rome liberated from my memory. I shall
outlive my Carthage, shall live to wage war with you again.
You have won this fight, but your enemy lives on. It will more
than gratify me, if Roman mothers and the lands of Italy
shall never expect nor enjoy peace of mind while I survive."
He was then hustled away to join a pitiful band of escapees
and sought refuge, a safe hiding place in the hills to the rear.

This marked the end of the war. The Carthaginian citadel
was voluntarily surrendered to Scipio, who took away
their unjust rule and weaponry, engraved terms of peace
in stone, destroyed their economic power with huge fines
and indemnities, disarmed their elephantine beasts of war[21].
Next their tall ships of war in torch-ignited flames provided
a savage spectacle to the men of Carthage and the sea itself
erupted in a storm of fire and Neptune himself was afraid.

The Roman general had won everlasting fame and honour,
was first to bear as *cognomen* the name of the conquered land[22],
Rome's power secured, and so he returned by sea to Rome
to be welcomed home in a splendid triumphal procession.
Before him Syphax, eyes cast down, was carried on a bier,
a captive, enduring golden fetters and chains about his neck.

[20] The River Po is named symbolically as one of the rivers of the underworld.
[21] After the battle of Zama Carthage was required to surrender her war elephants and pay 10,000 talents in reparation for the costs of war. See Duff's note *ad loc*.
[22] Scipio by popular acclaim became known as Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus.

Here too was Hanno and the youthful best born of Carthage,
the leaders of Macedon and sun-blackened Moorish men,
Numidians and Garamantes, observed by Ammon the god
who travel the sands, men too of Syrtis, the wrecker of ships.
Then Carthage herself comes[23] stretching her conquered hands
to the stars, and the statue of Spain, pacified now and biddable,
Cadiz at the world's end and Gibraltar's rock, finishing point
of Hercules' sometime labours and the Baetis' stream, used
to bathing the chargers of the sun in its sweet flowing waters.
There too the fearsome Pyrenees, mother of wars, raised high
her sylvan peaks to the skies and Ebro, no gentle flood itself
when together it pours its accumulated sources into the sea.
And yet no spectacle demanded more the eyes and minds
of the people than that of Hannibal in flight across the plains.
Himself upstanding in his chariot decked out in purple and gold,
presented the men of Rome with a martial visage to wonder at:
just so Bacchus looked descending from the perfumed Indies,
his car garlanded with the vine and by a team of tigers drawn,
or Hercules, the massy Giants slain, as he crossed the wide
Phlegraean plains of Macedon, his proud head brushing stars.
Hail, Father, unconquered and a match for Quirinus in praises
won, equal too to Camillus in your service to the Roman state!
When Rome remembers you as sprung from Capitoline Jove,
a scion of the gods, of the Thunderer divine, she tell no lies.

Finis

[23] In antiquity cities were often personified and represented as human figures, e.g. the goddess Roma: cf, Britannia.